

UVIC - McPHERSON

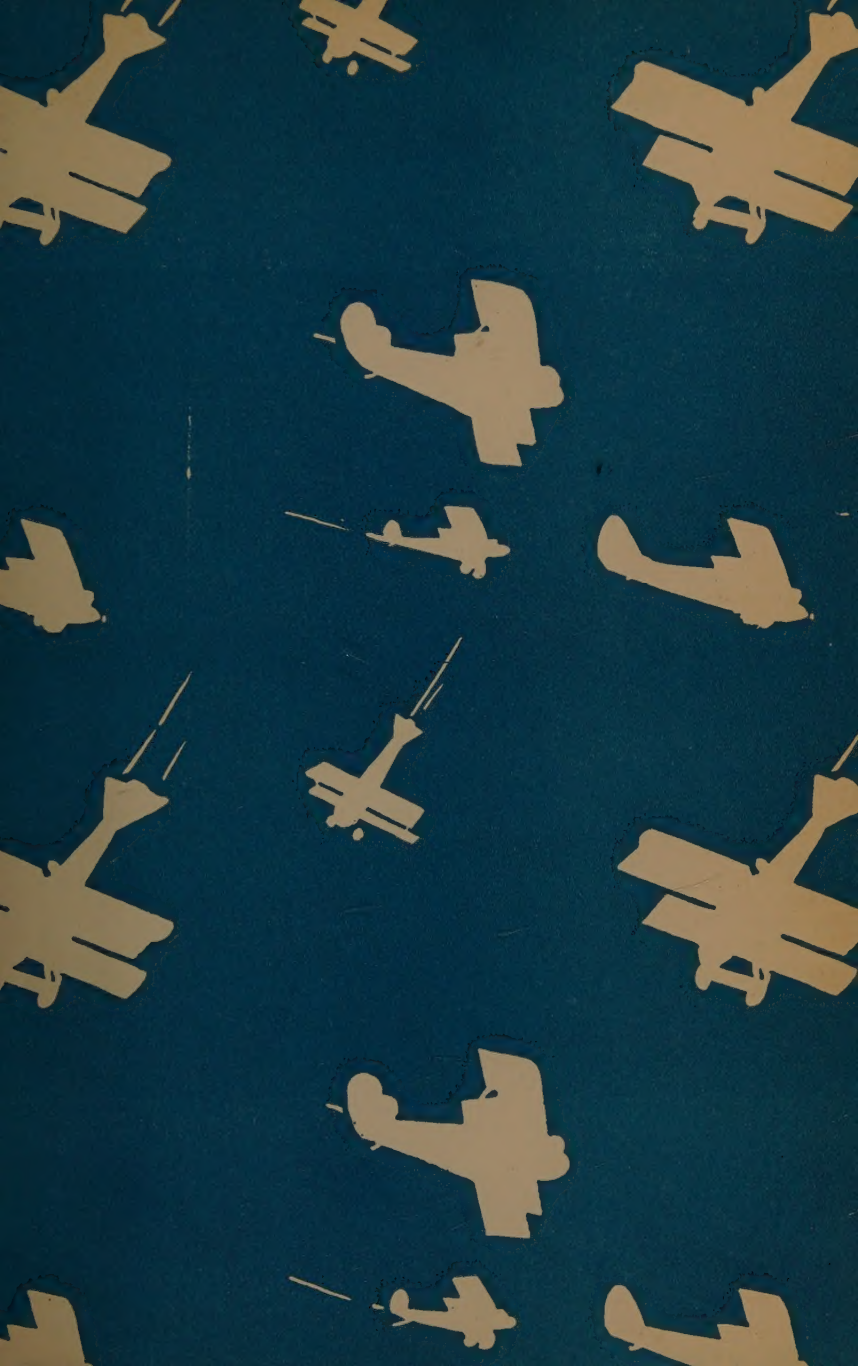


3 2775 90284094 0





UNIVERSITY  
OF VICTORIA  
LIBRARY









# ABOVE THE BRIGHT BLUE SKY

BOOKS BY  
ELLIOTT WHITE SPRINGS

ABOVE THE BRIGHT BLUE SKY  
LEAVE ME WITH A SMILE  
NOCTURNE MILITAIRE

# ABOVE THE BRIGHT BLUE SKY

MORE ABOUT THE WAR BIRDS

BY

ELLIOTT WHITE SPRINGS



GARDEN CITY, NEW YORK

DOUBLEDAY, DORAN & COMPANY, INC.

1928

UNIVERSITY OF VICTORIA  
LIBRARY  
Victoria, B. C.



COPYRIGHT, 1927, 1928  
BY DOUBLEDAY, DORAN & COMPANY, INC.

COPYRIGHT, 1928  
BY CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS  
ALL RIGHTS RESERVED  
PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES AT  
THE COUNTRY LIFE PRESS  
GARDEN CITY, N. Y.

FIRST EDITION  
AFTER THE PRINTING OF 250 DE LUXE COPIES

## CONTENTS

	PAGE
ABOVE THE BRIGHT BLUE SKY . . . .	3
ÆNEAS AMERICANUS . . . . .	37
SORE SUBJECTS . . . . .	69
CORNWALLIS, WE HAVE COME! . . . .	101
5618 . . . . .	135
9214 . . . . .	171
FED UP . . . . .	199
NO MORE REUNIONS . . . . .	233
BLESSED ARE THE MEEK . . . . .	251





ABOVE THE BRIGHT BLUE SKY

1.

*To Frances Ley Springs*



## ABOVE THE BRIGHT BLUE SKY

**I**T is just eleven years since I made my first solo flight. With a little luck I managed to get the plane off the ground, flew it around gingerly for fifteen minutes and got back down without damage to anything except my head, which swelled up until it was too big to get into Grant's tomb. I expected to find feathers on my shoulder blades the next morning and was ready to breakfast on bird seed. I was just as cocky as Ben Franklin when his kite backfired, and I realized how triumphant Peary must have felt when he saw the North Pole. The boys would be out of the trenches by Christmas.

My next two flights ended with the plane on top of me and I began to get uneasy about this flying. And I have been uneasy ever since, but I have never been able to shake off the idea that I was destined to pinch hit for Icarus. I



#### 4 ABOVE THE BRIGHT BLUE SKY

have never been good for anything else, and not very good at that. No one has ever seemed to feel that the conquest of the air would lag without my hand on the controls, but I have never stopped flying for more than a few months at a time. I have always been so enchanted by the third dimension that I have never gone up without enjoying the flight.

I have been frightened many times—badly, too; I have been frozen in January at 20,000 feet and fried in a fur suit just above the trenches in July; I have flown for hours with hot castor oil squirted back in my face; I have had a motor to vibrate so badly that a filling came out of a tooth; I have had a motor to stop over the Channel and another one to stop over a gas attack in Hunland; I have had a plane to catch fire in the air; I have been lost; I have been shot at; I have been hit. But it is such fascinating sport that I have never gotten out of a plane that I didn't look forward to the next flight with pleasure.

At the front it was a Big Game Hunt, the like of which had never been seen before and

I hope will never be seen again. It was the greatest sporting event in the history of history. The heavens were the grandstands and only the gods were spectators. The opposing teams were nearly equal and victory inclined first to one and then to the other. The warriors on the plains before Troy never struggled as did the pilots twenty thousand feet above Cambrai. The stake was the world, the forfeit was the player's place at the table, and the game had no recess. It was freeze out, and not even the sky was the limit. Imagine men stalking each other through the clouds day after day! Imagine children of seventeen matching their skill with nerveless veterans who fought on, begging for death because they could not check the speed of their lives!

It was the most dangerous of all sports and the most fascinating. It got into the blood like wine. It aged men forty years in forty days. It ruined nervous systems forever in an hour. Men came out of the trenches after three years of hell and became pilots. After their first

## 6 ABOVE THE BRIGHT BLUE SKY

fight in the air they felt the same grip on their hearts as the downy-faced youngsters facing the first adversary.

No words can describe the thrill of hiding in the clouds, waiting on human prey. The game is sighted, then a dive of five thousand feet, thirty seconds of diabolic evolutions, the pressure of triggers, soundless guns, an explosion, a pillar of flames, and the adversary hurtling downward in a living hell! What human experience can compare with it? The first time it happened to me I was sick at my stomach for three days. The last time it happened, five months later, I did not even look down to see the end. I was busy fixing my glove. Now I faint if a friend cuts his finger and I see the blood!

But being at the receiving end of a machine gun! That is a different matter. Every time I saw a tracer bullet go whistling by my wings, it took a year off my life. Every time my plane was rocked by an Archie burst my heart swelled out like a weak tire. Was I scared? You bet I was. I still am. And every



time you get shot at it hurts a little bit worse. The death struggles always grow more violent as the end approaches. After five or six operations watch a patient flinch when he sees a knife. I quicken my step every time I see a machine gun. I'm not afraid of a pistol, a rifle, a knife, or brass knucks—but don't point a machine gun at me, even in fun.

It was a fast game. No man could last six months at it and remain normal. Few could do it three months. The average life of a pilot at the front was forty-eight hours in the air, and to many it seemed an age. Is it any wonder pilots became fatalists? Is it strange that many men were killed doing wild stunts for their own amusement after they had been given leave or ordered home, or that many skilled pilots, their breasts covered with decorations, killed themselves carelessly while on a vacation?

But the war has been over ten years and flying is still the greatest of all sports.

I have had two planes in my back yard for the past five years, and even if there is no one

## 8 ABOVE THE BRIGHT BLUE SKY

to exchange shots with me I still think there is no sport to compare with flying. In the first place, it is the only way I know to utilize three dimensions. I can play tag with the law of gravitation. In the second place, I have boundless space at my disposal. The whole sky is my oyster. And in the third place, when I'm at the controls I step from this world into another one as completely as if I put a foot on Charon's barge. My other foot is on the rudder, but if it slips they'll both be on the barge.

When I leave the ground I leave behind me all earthly things. I am a free soul until I decide to return. And there is always the possibility that I may never return. I am already in another land—a sort of Purgatory that is neither heaven, hell, nor the dust from which I sprung. I can fly high and straight and take no chances, or I can loop among the tree tops and give the Three Sisters an even break. It is only then that I feel master of my destiny. Instead of running into the garden for

worms when the world goes wrong, I go out and get in the plane. As my wheels leave the ground, so do my troubles fall away beneath me. A dive through the clouds, a couple of loops, five turns of a spin, a sideslip, and I am refreshed as if by magic slumber. It is like Peter Pan searching for his shadow.

Commercial aviation will doubtless prosper; military aviation will win or lose the next war. But what holds me in thralldom is flying as a sport without any other compensation. And it is a sport that can be taken up by anyone now. I dare say that submarine navigation offers equal thrills and appeals just as strongly to its acolytes, but I have no place to keep a submarine. Also there is no company turning out a good cheap one-man sport submarine, whereas there are over fifty airplane factories in this country making good planes to sell from \$1,500 to \$15,000.

The best of these new sport planes will fly eight hours at a hundred and twenty miles an hour. You can have it open or closed and you

can take five friends and your golf sticks with you. The cheapest one will take you and your wife and oldest daughter four hundred miles in five hours for \$11.45, including tips. That's just about what it costs you to go thirty-six miles an hour through Trenton.

I am sorry that I can't regale you with new discoveries, but the modern airplane uses no new principles. Aërodynamically, it is the same as the original man-carrying kite of the Wright brothers. But it is as much of an improvement on it as the *Leviathan* on Fulton's *Clermont*.

The early planes were very unstable. They would just as soon go in one direction as another, and the pilot had to use both hands, both feet, and his teeth to keep it from emulating the autumn leaf. Engineers have since arranged the wings and the centre of gravity so that the plane has a tendency to remain on an even keel and fly with a minimum of control. For instance, the wings are tilted upward and tapered so that they will normally remain in equilibrium and return to it when upset.

The tail plane is set at an angle to the main planes, and after the angle is adjusted for the weight of the passengers will hold the nose level without further attention. There are other technical devices which are the result of years of practice and mechanical adaptation.

The modern ocean liner uses no hydrostatic principles that would astound Noah, but it's a lot better than the Ark. Radio is more efficient than a dove, but Noah got his weather report just the same. And I can retain my membership in the prophet's union and still hint that these refinements and improvements will continue.

The danger of motor failure is being minimized by the use of three small motors instead of one big one. If one motor has trouble, the plane can proceed on the other two. The chances of one motor failing at some time or other are about equal to the chances of getting wood alcohol in a cocktail, but the chances of two motors quitting on the same trip are no more formidable than twins. And the chances of all three stopping at the same

time are just the same as two pat royal flushes in the same deal.

But is it safe? Yes, if reasonable precautions are taken and reasonable judgment used. Of course, that is an admission that it isn't. Nobody wants to be reasonable in these piping times of garter flasks and red-hot complexes. Who wants to be reasonable when you can kidnap an evangelist? But it will be safe. The fool-proof automobile is yet to be invented, and by the same token no plane will fly properly after little Willie leaves his popgun in the oil sump. But don't blame human nature on the Wright brothers or expect Henry Ford to take up where Plato left off.

Yes, if you run into a storm over the mountains it may give you something to tell the boys at the club. But you can see a storm coming a long way off and there's always a weather bureau at the other end of the telephone. Did I hear a long coarse laugh at the mention of the weather bureau? Well, they may not be able to tell you exactly when a shower will stop the ball game but they can warn you



against starting for Chicago when there's a cyclone on the way from Kansas. The weather bureau functions under a cabinet officer, but even a Republican administration hasn't found any way to corrupt an aneroid barometer.

What if the plane falls to pieces in the air? All sky riders should wear parachutes. A steamship is required to carry a life preserver for every itinerant fish-feeder. No one wants to jump overboard with only a life preserver or a parachute between them and *de mortuis nil nisi bonum*. But if your departure is occasioned by an exploding boiler or a missing cotter pin, either one is better than a paid-up insurance policy.

What about a place to keep the new hedgehopper? Ah, there's the rub! I can fly to New York if I want to jeopardize my life on the taxi lanes, but I can't hand my suitcase to a redcap two thousand feet above Times Square and say, "Wait for me at the taxi platform while I telephone and see if she's at home." No, I've got to fly on to Mineola or Staten Island or New Brunswick, and land there and

walk in. It's like Moses being able to look down on the Promised Land but never reaching the terminal.

That facility will take care of itself. Many miles of railroad track were built and worn out before the first Moorish-turreted station was designed and connected with the hotel by a subway. When the automobile was first thrust upon an unsuspecting public as a popular means of locomotion, our country was connected by a series of mud holes, lined by telegraph wires and liver-tonic advertisements. Now every hamlet has a bonded indebtedness, cement gutters, and one-way streets.

The same thing will happen when the man-with-the-vote gets the price tag off his wings.

Every little hamlet will have a landing field with the name of the town prominently displayed. The air lines will be lighted at night. Some are lighted now. Many of the larger cities have already built municipal airports.

In five years, we'll have good maps; we'll get weather reports by radio as we fly, and

we'll never have to be out of range of a landing field and service station.

But who is going to fly these planes? The same people that are now steering puddle-jumpers. A plane is not a bucking bronco. It's very little harder to learn to fly a plane than to drive a car. Of course, mother-in-law may hit the church steeple on the way back from tea in Boston, but didn't she knock down a traffic tower with her new coupé last year?

There is one important consideration here. Mistakes on the ground are not usually so costly as mistakes in the air. I have no argument to offer to overcome that drawback. I am not subsidized by any manufacturer and I am not trying to colour facts. In a car, it's a dented fender and notify the insurance companies. In a plane, it's silver handles and Hello, Saint Peter. But the added risk will never keep the public out of the air any more than government poisoning of the people, by the people, for the Anti-Saloon League will turn the Eighteenth Amendment into the Golden Rule.

Don't get the idea that all flying accidents are fatal. Far from it. We have thousands of automobile and railway accidents in which no one is injured. The same is true of airplane crashes. There are more people killed by faith in Gordon Gin labels every day than will ever cross the Styx with a broken propeller for an oar.

Every pilot has a different idea about teaching a pupil to fly. The prevailing opinion throughout the country is that it is a long and complicated process. That idea spread during the war when the Army was training pilots. It first sent them to a ground school where they never saw a plane for two months. They began their training as pilots by learning infantry drill and studying the military tactics of Frederick the Great. After they learned to turn their faces toward West Point when they said their prayers, they were sent to flying fields where they were court-martialled until the Armistice.

But all that is not strictly necessary. I would not attempt to outline the best method of

instruction. If I did, 4796 old instructors would write me that I had plagiarized the information from a learn-to-play-the-piano-at-home circular. Ten hours is plenty of time in which to learn to fly. I've known men who went solo in two hours and some that took forty. The flying schools base their tuition on ten hours' instruction. My experience has been that people who had musical training picked it up most quickly. They have already been trained to coördinate mind and body. The most difficult people to teach to fly are those who know more about it than the instructors. Some instructors dive suddenly and pull up sharply a few times and beat such pupils' brains out on the top wing. Some prefer a lead pipe, but it's hard to make that look accidental.

The most difficult thing to master is landing the plane. If you want to stop a car you cut off the power and put on brakes. If you want to dock an ocean liner, you turn off the steam and whistle for a tug. But a plane must be taken from one medium of support and placed on

another at a high rate of speed. It's as difficult as taking a girl from a lighted ballroom to a dark garden and bringing her back without mussing her hair. In the air, the force of the air current on the wings supports the plane; on the ground the wings and plane both rest their weight on the wheels, which are on the ground. It's just the reverse distribution. And you must reverse without disturbing the landscape.

When a ship runs aground the captain has to wait for the tide to lift him off. The pilot of a plane accomplishes the same thing by raising or lowering the speed. The wings do not get enough pressure to lift the fuselage until the speed reaches a certain point, which is about forty miles an hour for a light pleasure plane and seventy miles an hour for a heavy military plane. To get this speed, it must run along the ground. Hence the need for a long open space. It must be faced into the wind to prevent side pressure, so the field must be square for everyday use in changing winds. To land after a flight, the plane must



be brought within a few feet of the ground at the moment the speed drops below the stalling point and the wings no longer support its weight. The transfer from air support to ground support is then made and the plane runs along the ground and gradually loses speed. The length of the run may be reduced somewhat by the use of brakes, but they are a very recent development and still in the 'experimental stage. I am experimenting with them now but will withhold my opinion until it is worth something. I had a car once with brakes on the front wheels but none on the rear. I was trying to beat my own record down hill one day and either had to use the brakes or ruin a dairy. I used the brakes but the results were not highly satisfactory as the back end of the car beat me to the bottom of the hill by two lengths. An airplane has no rear wheels to put brakes on, so if you apply the brakes to the front wheels, the same thing is liable to happen.

I suppose I have seen a thousand bad landings made by pupils and corrected in time by

instructors so that there was not the slightest damage. I have seen at least a hundred accidents in landing after the pupils went solo, but I have never seen anyone seriously injured while making a landing on an airdrome. Most fatal accidents are caused by an unpremeditated contact with terra firma.

Average people get the idea and are able to land a plane after twenty practice attempts. They will bounce some for a long time and smash tailskids and landing struts, but they won't need first aid. The bigger the field and the slower the plane, the easier it is.

I don't mean to say that anyone can become an expert pilot in ten hours, but that is all the dual instruction that is needed. They have to get their experience the same way we all do. But how many legally licensed automobile drivers could handle a racing car or a bus? Or why should they? They get to the office and back every day and that's all that's necessary. The same thing applies to the private plane pilot. He doesn't have to be able to handle a two-hundred-and-fifty-mile-an-hour

fighting plane or a fifteen-passenger transport plane.

The Army made an experiment out at McCook Field. They selected an average young man who had never ridden in an airplane and knew nothing about one. He made his first flight at six in the morning, and before six that same night he was flying alone. That is a bit extreme but it only goes to show what can be done. Many men were at the front, fighting, after twenty-five hours in the air.

I taught my wife to fly without losing my temper once, and I have seen men commit assault and battery on several chauffeurs for minor offences. After two hours in the air, she flew the plane unassisted, and after six more she made landings. Before she had ten hours, she did tailspins, whip stalls, and vertical banks. She's been flying four years, and she has had only two slight accidents. I don't mean that she is capable of handling strange planes over strange territory, but in a plane she is accustomed to, she is as good a pilot as any I know.

The best pilot I ever knew was Larry Callahan, and he can't drive a car yet. The last time I drove with him, he hit an ice wagon on a sixty-foot street while he was still in first speed. Yet he went solo in a plane after two hours and fifteen minutes of instruction.

Some people say they would be too frightened ever to handle a plane. Being afraid didn't stop them from learning to drive a car. Most people are afraid of being shot, but that doesn't keep them from visiting Chicago. I was afraid when Callahan hit that ice wagon, but I still ride in a car. And if I wasn't scared when my wife started to loop while I was asleep, I'll fly Lincoln Beachy's barn door to the South Pole. And the only time my wife was ever frightened in the air was when she found a caterpillar in the cockpit.

I can't give you the pathological reactions, but men are always more afraid of a plane than women. I've never yet left the ground with a man who wasn't visibly uneasy, but I have never taken up a woman who was wor-

ried about anything but keeping her skirts down. Usually the women ask me to stunt a little, but the cockpit of the plane is covered with fingernail marks where various men have taken a firm hold when the nose dropped ten degrees. Once I had to land ten miles from home because the man I had up with me got panicky every time I started to turn around. He thought he was in static balance between the quick and the dead. I got caught by a whirlwind when I had an elderly aunt up for her first ride. In landing, we smashed the undercarriage and a wing, but she only smiled and said she wanted to go up again as soon as I got the plane repaired.

There's a lot of misapprehension about who is physically qualified to fly a plane. That began with the war too. The Air Service wouldn't take anyone who couldn't pass a very rigid examination. But they did the same thing with infantry and artillery officers. They wouldn't take a man with flat feet or a weak heart in any branch of the service. There's no use teaching a man to fly military planes just

to put him on the pension list, if he's so cock-eyed he can't sight a machine gun.

But that's war. We are discussing pleasure. All those who got a dollar a year for staying at home will tell you the difference. And any of those patriotic souls who claimed exemption so their wives would have somebody to support will tell you that any warrior who indulged in pleasure during the war was a traitor. The Y. M. C. A. may hang me in effigy, but I'll make the statement right here that in the cool of the evening after the shooting is over, a good bang-up war is not such bad fun. Remember that Sherman got his idea of war in Georgia. I got the same idea down there in peace time. There's a lot of difference between flat-footing it across Georgia and having a forced landing in Paris. Sherman was trying to convince us Rebels that we were licked and he didn't have any more success making himself understood down there than I did in Paris. If that be treason, get out your bow and arrow and zoom down the Rue de la Paix yourself.



The Army took the war seriously and wasn't satisfied with just getting men who were physically perfect. You had to be eccentric as well. There were all sorts of machines invented to determine who could fly and who couldn't. They'd strap you in a chair and turn you upside down and ask you to recite the multiplication tables. Then they'd put you in a glass case and pump all the air out of it and you too. I don't know what they proved by that, because you could always get someone else to take the examination for you and it was easy to memorize the eye-test charts.

Anybody who is physically qualified to drive an automobile can fly a plane. There are thousands of people at the wheel to-day who should be in wheel chairs. They shouldn't fly, but neither should they stalk pedestrians. What business has a deaf man in traffic?

No man can stand high altitudes very long, but those private planes can't go high enough to make your nose bleed. Anyone who can survive a fortnight in the mountains will never know how high they are without looking at

the altimeter. If they want to break an altitude record, they'll have to use an oxygen tank, but otherwise they are all right. Don't the doctors send invalids to a high altitude?

If a man is subject to heart failure, he shouldn't be a pilot. Neither should he be a barber or a motorman or a taxi driver. I think it would be a good thing for all pilots, engineers, critics, sleep walkers, congressmen, novelists, and bridge players to have a physical examination before they are allowed to practise their professions, but I don't think it is any more necessary for the one than the other.

Anyone whose eyes are good enough to steer a car through traffic without having the insurance cancelled can see well enough to land a thirty-foot plane in a forty-acre lot. Poor old Callahan was so blind that he had to have lenses ground into the glasses of his goggles, and he could read a Hun's palm at a hundred yards. Mannock, the great British pilot, had a glass eye.

The human sense of balance comes from the ears, so the army doctors always examined

them carefully. But if a man's ears are so defective he can't fly, neither can he dance or swim or walk on stilts.

I firmly believe in physical examinations. I'm not decrying them. My father-in-law is president of the Life Extension Institute, which specializes in them, and I must be loyal or starve, but Bright's disease is no more fatal in a flying machine than in an elevator. By all means, have a physical examination, but don't wait until you buy a plane. If you're colour blind, you've got a much greater chance of a golden wedding at two thousand feet than you have at sea level trying to coördinate your clutch with red and green lights that are always hidden behind a signboard or a post. Don't worry about your health. Your heirs will do that for you.

The public regards aviators as a cross between trapeze performers and sword swallowers. There are two reasons for this, and neither one of them is the fault of the aviators or their profession.

In the first place, the thrill-mongers, who

handle the headlines, consider that every time a ten-year-old airplane which has been cheating the junkpile since the war loses a wing, that is news. The Associated Press has a policy of featuring every airplane accident. That causes 119 million people to say, "I told you so," and assume the mantle of Elijah. Sometimes they read the same account in five different papers and claim the soothsaying blue ribbon on five different counts. All oracles play safe.

In the second place, there is stunting and dare-deviltry. If the American Legion or the Daughters of the American Revolution are having a picnic, they ask some friends with a plane to stunt for them. He likes to be accommodating and loops twice in a bargain biplane and loses both wings and his place in the census. That convinces everybody that flying is suicidal and flyers are fools.

If the Sons and Daughters of Holier-Than-Thou are laying the corner stone of the new jail and want to get a big crowd together to listen to their speeches, they ask some local

aëronaut to give an exhibition right over their heads. And they don't want any safety-first flying, either. They want blood, like the crowd at a Roman circus.

Last Armistice Day I received eleven requests to stunt for various celebrations. I obliged three crowds and was on the way to the fourth when a valve stem broke and I made a hurried descent into an orchard. The papers commented that another fool had crashed. The plane was not scratched by my landing, but when I went back with a new valve stem to get it I found that most of it had been carried away by the souvenir hounds. Yet some spellbinder was getting himself elected to Congress by gassing the crowd that I had been trying to entertain.

I was taking off to stunt for a crowd on Defence Day two years ago at the request of the War Department, when the plane had difficulties and I couldn't get over a hill that was right in front of me. I am vice president of a railroad, and when the tracks can't go over a hill we tunnel through it. I tried the

same thing in the plane. All I got was a complaint from the local committee for not being on time for the parade.

A pilot was asked to stunt for a crowd that was to assemble for the formal opening of a bridge between North and South Carolina. The governors of both states were to speak and the committee wanted a big crowd to listen to reasons why the bridge marked an epoch and why they should be reëlected. This was the first time in history that the governor of South Carolina could make a speech after a meeting with the governor of North Carolina.

In its zeal, the committee advertised that the pilot was going to fly under the bridge instead of over it. A big crowd assembled on the chance of his hitting a pier or drowning, and he had to make good. If the water was high, he would have about two feet clearance, but if the water was low, he would have twelve. Thank heavens, it didn't rain before the fatal day!

Now flying under a bridge is just as easy as driving a car through the garage door.



Plenty of men have done it. The difference is that if you hit the door, you say a truck side-swiped you, and if you hit the bridge, it's headlines in the Associated Press and 119 million people exclaiming, "I told you so," and "I wonder if that's the same fellow who gave sister the bum check." A French aviator flew through the Arc de Triomphe and nobody paid the slightest attention to him but his commanding officer and the mayor of Paris. But another one hit a cable coming out from under the Eiffel Tower and his name was immortalized by every journal in the world.

This fellow flew under the bridge once and then a sparkplug wire came loose and cut out two cylinders. He was turning and stalled, and when he got back under control there was the bridge in front of him, so he had to go under it again. He flew on down the river and almost had to go under another bridge before he climbed up high enough to get over the trees on the bank and land in a meadow.

Did he get a note of thanks from the com-

mittee? He did not. He got cussed out by His Excellency for interrupting his speech and taking the crowd away. They neglected to tell him what time the welkin was going to ring so he could avoid the gusts of hot air.

But looping the loop is a different thing from taking the children down to have lunch with Aunt Katy. Don't judge aviation by it. If Little Oscar takes the sedan out and amuses himself by skidding on the wet asphalt, he may smash a fender, and that's not going to hurt the automobile business. But if little Oscar takes up papa's new cloud-chaser and tries to fly between the skyscrapers and forgets about the new wireless aerial—that's scareheads on the first page and a gold star for the prophets.

But in spite of all that, hundreds of people are flying for pleasure and getting it. And once they start, they'll never stop.

There is one aspect of aerial transportation that is holding back its development seriously. You can fly the plane with one hand, but a cockpit offers the same objection as a

Ford coupé. You can't make a girl walk home when you can't park the darn thing. However, I have faith in science, and it won't be long before the Anti-Vice League will be patrolling the Milky Way with searchlights on the planes, and reformers will be pointing to the Wright brothers as the corrupters of youth. The Mann Act will then be known as the Blue Sky Law. Apparently I am too late to apply for a patent if I solve the problem, for I asked one young lady if she had ever been looped in an airplane and she responded, "No, but I've been kissed in one."



# ÆNEAS AMERICANUS

*TO M. E. Carter, Hub Garside, and Jack Colgan*



## ÆNEAS AMERICANUS

**J**OE GISH came in the train and sat down on the vacant seat beside me.

"How's the boy?" he greeted me.

"Fine. How's yourself?"

"Great."

That's how two old friends expressed their joy at a chance meeting after years on different sides of the world. We talked at random for a few minutes and then Joe fixed his eyes on a young Army officer who came in with a pretty girl and took a seat up forward. He called my attention to them. The officer was evidently a newly commissioned lieutenant, known to us in years gone by as a shave-tail.

"You can't have a war without women," Joe informed me gravely, still watching the couple ahead; "but you gotta be able to take 'em or leave 'em alone. These bennies who



can't keep their minds off the skirts ought to be exempted for physical disability or pathological incapacity, depending on what light you view the matter in."

"Why?" I enquired.

"Old Man Mars is a very particular boss. He won't stand for any divided allegiance. Take Sam Wise, for instance. Remember him?"

"Yes. What about him?"

"Well, I'll tell you about him." And this is the story as Joe told it to me:

Sam and I roomed together for a while in England when we were in training. He told me all about his trouble then and I kept seeing signs of it all the time after that. We spent most of the war together, off and on, you know.

Sam had a girl at home. And he wasn't satisfied about leaving her there. He was sure something was going to happen to her before he got back. He'd been crazy over her for a long time, though on other subjects he was sane enough:

It seems that she was sort of a flirt and, while she liked Sam well enough, there was always a new man in town that she had to put over the jumps and tie to her chariot. First he'd have her and then, presto chango, she was gone off with some new piccolo player. When he enlisted she got sort of kind-hearted and gave him some encouragement and ruined the whole war for him.

A lot of men are like that—some rag and bone high-tones them and they never recover their equilibrium. Talk about the evil eye! It's not half as dangerous as the glad eye! And it seems like the worse these stricken gentlemen get treated, the more they clamour for another dose. It must be a sort of aberration like the fellows have who can't love a girl with knock-knees or her ears showing.

Well, whatever it is, Sam had a bad case of it. There wasn't but one girl in the world for him and he had arrived at that conclusion without any help from her. He was one of those fellows who leave such set-ups around for the boys with finesse. No wonder the poor

dears turn a receptive ear to an imported line!

Sam didn't enjoy Europe at all. If it wasn't one thing that bothered him, it was several others. He'd get the home papers and read about all the parties she went to and run around gnashing his teeth for days. He'd try and figure out who she went with and why. He was as jealous as Julius Cæsar, and when she didn't write to him regularly, he'd have a bad attack of the blues and hover on the brink of hell for days. And that boy had an imagination that could always give him something to worry over.

The pity of it was that he was missing so much fun. He said he was expecting her to be true to him, so he'd have to be true to her. That was just bunk because the real reason was—as I told you before—he had one of these complexes. He just wasn't tempted. He just didn't believe that any other girl in the world had such soft hands or warm lips. Besides that, he wasn't interested in finding out whether they did or not.

All the gang at the squadron used to go down to London every week on wash-out day for a party, but he wouldn't go along. He'd stay at the squadron and read nice books or write her long, tender epistles. Wherever he'd go, he'd take her picture and spend a respectful amount of time every day admiring it. I couldn't work up any enthusiasm over her—just an average-looking little blonde. She was fairly pretty but nothing to write home about. That sort of thing was all right for a while but after we got on the service machines they were killing us off at the rate of about 10 per cent. a month, and he got to brooding over it. Anybody who stayed sober got to brooding over it sooner or later. I thought for a while that he was going to lose his nerve and give up flying like a lot of others did. Watching your friends get bumped off every day is sure to make you stop and think, and if you sit around and let your brain work it's bound to prey on your mind.

Now, remember, he wasn't even engaged to this Beatrice of his. She had let him kiss her a

few times and she sure must have had hot lips, because those kisses everlastingly scorched his soul. I don't think he minded getting killed except for losing her. Finally, we just dragged him along with us a few times and poured likker down his face until he got human again. After that, he was all right until he'd get a talking jag and try to tell me all about it again. But the boy sure was in a bad way for a while. I think he'd have given up flying right then if he hadn't wanted to do something worth while so he could cinch the matter and go home as a hero to claim her.

It was the same out at the front. He'd go up and scrap ten Huns single-handed, and get licked, and come flopping back to the airdrome all full of holes, and not give a damn about it. Then he'd get a paper from home and read where she'd gone off for a visit at some camp and he'd rage and tear around the place as if he'd been personally insulted by the Kaiser himself. And the girl sure gave him plenty to worry about. She wasn't letting any grass grow under her.

I remember once that he was out on patrol and got separated from the rest after a dogfight. He was lost and came back toward the lines at an angle. He was bucking a head wind and dodging Archie when he saw six Fokkers dive on a two-seater that was out doing an artillery shoot. He came down on the Fokkers and managed to hit one of them, and he and the two-seater managed to fight the others off until some S.E.'s came up and chased the Fokkers home. The boys in the two-seater were very grateful and duly confirmed the Fokker for him and made a long report to the brigade about it. It was such a good show that he almost got a decoration out of it but as he hadn't hit five Huns yet, all he got was a nice citation in Comic Cuts and a dozen pats on the back and drinks for the rest of his life on the boys in the two-seater.

But was he all set up about it? I should say not! He read in the home paper that day where his girl had joined the Motor Corps, and he nearly went crazy worrying about her driving a bunch of officers around at night

with no mother to guide her. A girl would have to do more than kiss me a few times to convince me that she was so dangerous on a dark night. The only reason he wanted the war to end was so he could dash home and claim her before someone else eloped with her. Nothing but an acquired taste for strong likker kept his mind on the war at all.

But the boy was good in the air. He picked off two Huns one day in a dogfight, and the home papers began to take notice when his name started to appear regularly in dispatches. He took up the sport of diving on two-seaters, and when they didn't get him first, he'd get them. He got decorated, and the home papers couldn't find room for anything else on the front page for weeks. And his girl began to warm up like a fur suit in a dogfight. That was more than he could stand. He had a chance to go home as an instructor and he almost took it. But he wanted to go home looking like a barber pole, and stuck to it.

Then he was in a couple of bad crashes



when the new Fokkers came out and between Miss Nemesis at home, Lieutenant General Hennessey with his three stars and little Kismet hiding behind the clouds over in Hunland, the poor devil nearly gave up the ghost and put his face on the barroom floor. But so did we all.

Those Fokkers gave many a good man eternal insomnia. I remember seeing you in Boulogne one day when you couldn't get a glass to your mouth with one hand until after the third one.

When the justly famous Armistice was signed, Sam and I were up at Toul waiting on some American planes to arrive so we could go up and darken the skies like all the newspapers prophesied and glorified back in '17. The plane that had been doing all the darkening was in the shop for repairs right then and the sun was just blinding, it was so bright. Bim Oliver and Larry Callahan and Reed Landis went up about an hour before the Armistice in some S.E.'s to make sure the war was actually going to stop. It must have

stopped because they all got back. Ever since then they've been known as the men who stopped the war.

After we made sure that the hostilities had at least been postponed for a generation, the next problem before the board was ways and means to get home before we got tried for our crimes. Sam was just wild. He worried himself sick for two months for fear he was going to miss the next boat.

We shot crap, played bridge and blackjack, took some amateur French lessons and dodged A.P.M.'s for a month around Toul and Nancy, and then orders come through for us to go down to Issoudun. We thought we were on the way home at last.

All roads went through Paris, where men were men and the women were double-breasted. Some of the boys got to Issoudun and some fell by the wayside and went to Egypt and Constantinople instead. When we hit the metropolis I was all for lingering a few days to upset some of those big fleshpots

they serve there, but Sam was in a hurry and dragged me on through.

We arrived at Issoudun without the usual M.P. escort and inquired casually when we were going to sail. We were greeted with a long loud laugh. Sail? There were two million doughboys in France and they could only take home two hundred and sixty-seven a week. Figure it out for yourself! And the wounded go first! After that, the divisions that couldn't behave themselves would be shipped home to save as much French property as possible.

We spent New Year's at Issoudun. Don't ask me what we did to kill time. It's too painful. But we finally found out why we were sent to Issoudun instead of to a port. Somebody wanted to find out what effect high altitudes, cheap cognac, and wind-up had on pilots. So we became a lot of biological experiments and walking laboratories. I've never seen the conclusions they drew from this valuable data, but I'll bet my bonus they were

interesting. You remember there was a theory rumoured around that only perfect men could ever qualify as pilots, and some ingenious plumbers had built a lot of elaborate devices that were supposed to weed out the unfit. They would turn you upside down and whirl you about and tickle your feet and fire pistols behind you and tell you ghost stories, and if you didn't have a sense of humour about the thing they would turn you down and make a bugler out of you.

Well, down at Issoudun, all the best pilots back from the front got sick when they were whirled around in the torture chair, and one fellow jumped through the window when the pistol went off behind him. They found one pilot who was practically blind, he was so near-sighted, and they were about to recommend him for a disability discharge when they found out that he had seven Huns to his credit and was the guy who used to lead all the long reconnaissance patrols. They say that one doctor wept for weeks after he found out that Mannock had a glass eye, Carlin a wood-

en leg, and Guynemer was a hopeless invalid. The best score that was made in the tests was credited to a pilot that had crashed every machine he had ever flown and who later died of heart failure.

In the middle of this came a call from Paris for volunteers. They wanted ten officers to act as couriers for the Peace Commission. Sam put his name on the list.

"How come?" I asked him. "I thought you wanted to go home."

"I do," he told me. "And this is where I start. Some of the couriers will be sent back home. I'll get the job, and when I get there, I'll resign. That's simple."

So he packed up and left. About a month later I glanced up from my glass and there he was again, looking as sweet as a green lime.

"How are all the folks on Broadway?" I asked him.

"Shut up," he told me, taking my cognac. "They sent me down to Liberia the first trip and when I got back from there they had me scheduled to take a valentine to the Shah of

Persia. I decided that I had better go home with you after all; but they wouldn't take my resignation at first. So I had to insult a Congressman and let him have my job taken away from me. Then I had to apologize to him to keep from being court-martialled as well. When do we move from here?"

"Never," I told him. "I've reserved my table for next New Year's Eve."

After Washington's Birthday we were sent down to Bordeaux to the concentration camp. We thought sure we were going to sail this time, but we found out that there were nine hundred and fifty-two officers ahead of us and they only took fifteen a week and didn't want them.

Sam was a wreck by that time. He wanted his girl to see him again while he still had his teeth. He'd weep about her into his glass until his cognac was too weak to kick. All he could think about or talk about was how to get home.

We had an epidemic of flu down there and I got it. I was in bed with a bottle of cognac

when in comes Sam with a broad grin on his face.

"I'm going home," he tells me. "I sail this afternoon."

"Fine," say I, "did my orders come through too?"

"Orders? Orders? I haven't got any orders," he informs me, "but I'm going home just the same. They've asked some of us to help take the wounded down to the boat from the hospital. Three of us are going to forget to get off. It's an English boat and we can bribe a steward to get us a cabin somewhere. If they catch us, they can't do anything but kick us out of the Army. And that wouldn't make me mad. We'll have a whole week to think up an alibi. Too bad you can't come along now, but try and make it on the next boat. I hate to leave you but I'm in an awful hurry. Bring my trunk, will you, when you come? All we can take now is a musette bag. Cheerio!"

I heard later that they got away with it, and I was sort of sorry I hadn't tried to go back with them. But in less than a month they



were all three back in camp. They got a cabin all right and nobody asked for their tickets and everything was very pleasant. They played bridge all the way over and had good food and lots of service, with all the comforts of tourists. In fact, they had gained a few pounds and were feeling quite cheerful when they got to Hoboken. Then a kind-hearted quartermaster colonel nearly killed himself laughing when he found out they didn't have any orders. He looked up the regulations and found that if an officer went A.W.O.L. he was supposed to be sent back to the last place he left. So he sent them back on the next boat after keeping them in jail in Hoboken through the week. They came back on the same boat—only this time in irons—and it had to stop a week in Liverpool for supplies.

We gave them a great welcome and called them the international commuters. The only way they could relieve their feelings was to sit around and figure out how much extra they had cost the Government. I think the figure

they agreed on was twelve hundred dollars apiece.

Every Monday they'd get court-martialled. And each time for a different crime. The only thing that saved them from having to make little rocks out of big ones was that the judges couldn't agree on just what Article of War it was they had violated, and why. No one had seen them get on the ship and the judge'advocate was unable to prove anything about how they got to Hoboken. So the Court compromised finally by finding them guilty of being absent without leave and fined them their pay for thirty days and confined them to the camp for three months and put their names at the foot of the list for passage home.

Sam didn't mind anything but that last part. That made him desperate. The concentration camp certainly was a bed of roses. When the mud would thaw out we'd need a set of pontoons and an air jacket. A lot of men who were reported missing and unaccounted for lost their lives trying to cross the camp street.

Many a poor soul did we rescue out in front of the barracks just as his head disappeared in the mud and quicksand.

One boy got so disheartened waiting around in the mud that he contracted melancholia from the French and had to be taken to hospital. The next week all the hospital patients were sent home. That gave Sam a brilliant idea. He told the camp doctor confidentially that he was Leonardo da Vinci and began playing an idiotic solitaire with his monthly report blanks which he said were Pullman tickets to Berlin. He'd been behaving so nutty all the time that it didn't take much acting on his part to convince the doc that he was mentally underpowered and had bubbles in his think-tank. So the doc sent him over to the hospital for observation and care.

I went over to see him later and he was so pleased with himself that I thought he really was crazy. He was in the psychopathic ward but he had found three mild nuts who could play bridge and was enjoying himself.

"I'll tell your folks you're ageing grace-

fully," he informs me. "We're going home next week. All I've got to do is to stay nutty until we get on board and then what-ho for the old hog and hominy!"

"It won't be any trouble for you to stay nutty until you get on board," I told him.

But he didn't sail the next week. Two nervous patients jumped overboard from a ship at sea and were drowned. Then the surgeon general issued orders that no more neurasthenics were to be sent home until they were cured. Just how they were to be cured, he didn't say; but at any rate they weren't to be drowned. I've seen a lot of them around lately and I can't see that they are cured.

Sam heard this cheering bit of news and went right down to see the doc about it. The doc confirmed the rumour and then Sam tried to laugh it off. The doc couldn't see the joke. Sam told him that it was all a mistake and that he really wasn't crazy at all. He offered to recite the dates of all the Presidents to prove it. The doc laughed with him and told him that was the way all the brainstormers felt

about the matter when approached confidentially. He said it was all right by him—he could claim he was Napoleon if he wanted to—but he'd better go right back to bed again or he'd be the Man in the Iron Mask. Sam tried to prove his point and insisted on his sanity so violently that they had to put him in a strait-jacket for a few days.

They let up on him a little and one day he sneaked out and came over to the camp and begged us to help him to get out. We decided to take him over to see the doc who had put him in and see if we couldn't explain the thing to him. He was a good sort and we felt sure he would appreciate a joke on himself as well as one on Sam. But that doc had gone home a week before and Sam's last hope was likewise missing. We stopped in at an estaminet to discuss the matter over a little cognac and rum. Naturally, Sam got himself plastered to the third vertebra and a good time was had by all. Sam got it into his head that the barmaid was his long-lost blonde and we

had a time getting him out of the place. But not until after he had cut off all his buttons and given them to her.

When we got back to camp there was an ambulance and three husky guards waiting for him. We gave 'em a good battle but Sam had to go back with 'em just the same.

A medical board examined him and declared that he was suffering from a disease with a long Greek name but which meant "nutty" in plain English. They made him a trusty and gave him the job of amusing the real simple-minded. He had to go through the baggage of those that had gone West and take out anything that he could give his squad to play with to keep them out of trouble. He ran across poor old Mac's kit that we had packed up when he was killed, and that started him off on a real attack that there wasn't any fake about. He went before another board just after that and they diagnosed him all over again. They said he had another disease with a Greek name but it still meant "cuckoo" in English.

Sam asked if he might speak to the board after he heard their verdict. He was granted that boon.

"Are you all sure that I am crazy?" he asked them.

They told him they were.

"Are you all sure that I am unfit to be sent home and not responsible for any of my acts?" he asked them again.

They told him they were.

"Then you can't court-martial me for this!" he shouted. And with that he soaked the head doc a terrific crack on the nose and blacked both the adjutant's eyes before they could fit him into another strait-jacket.

I saw him just before I sailed and he begged me not to tell anybody about him as he was afraid that he was really crazy now. I got home all right and kept quiet about him. There was nothing anybody could do for him anyway then. I ran into a fellow from Sam's home town and inquired quite casually about his girl. This bird expressed surprise that Sam considered her his girl. He said there were



several hundred others suffering under the same delusion. He said she'd been mascot to six divisions and two battleships. I was sort of sorry to hear that because it looked to me like Sam was going to get something that was pretty shop-worn. And he was too good a fellow to have to take what everybody else had passed up. But I knew he'd do it because she'd put the curse on him once. But it made 'me mad to think how good he'd been on account of her.

I got a cable from him in June asking me please to be sure and meet the boat he was sailing on. I went down to Newport News and watched them bring him ashore from a battleship in a big iron cage. I did everything I could to get him out but saw the bars, and I couldn't do that because there was a heavy guard of Marines around it. I never saw the Marines fight, but they did do lovely guard duty. The only way to argue with those boys is to say it with lead pipe and say it first. Some of the other patients were really pretty violent, and nobody could be sure which was which.

I didn't want to hang around long because I was afraid they might put me in a cage too.

I talked to the doctor who was escorting Sam and I saw there was no use arguing with him. He told me that they let Sam out one afternoon to take a walk and it was ten days before they caught him down in Marseilles trying to get passage to Spain. On the way back he poured a plate of hot soup on his guard and they had to tie him up to make him quit pulling the emergency cord and stopping the train.

In spite of all my pleas, they shipped him on up to Plattsburg, to the government nut farm, and said he couldn't be examined by another board for three months. I went down to Washington and started a battle with the red-tape kings. It didn't take me long to find out that it would take longer than three months to get him before a board in Washington. I tried a habeas corpus, but since the Government had taken over the railroads and telegraph lines and cables they had taken over the

habeas corpus too. You can't play tag around Washington unless you belong to the union.

I finally got the right idea. All the Army was worried about was whether or not he was going to claim anything from them. They didn't want him but they wanted to make sure he wasn't going to be on the payroll forever. So I went to work to get that part waived. It took two Senators, four Representatives, two cases of Scotch, and a Cabinet officer's niece to get the surgeon general to turn him loose in my care.

I took the papers myself and went up to Plattsburg to make sure about the thing. When I got there, I found that he was threatened with diphtheria and was quarantined for three weeks. It seems that you can have the germs in your throat without having diphtheria, but they isolate you for three weeks, just the same, to make sure. So here he was, in solitary confinement like a prisoner for three weeks after he was legally free. And quarantined when he was perfectly well, too. I talked to him from

a respectful distance and it's a good thing I wasn't on a medical board examining him.

I gave it up and left the papers with a friendly doc and went on back home. I got a postcard from him stating that he was out and then a little later I got a wire in which he informed me that he was getting married in August and would I please act as best man? I accepted and wired him how happy I was to know that everything had turned out so well. But I certainly didn't think so. With her proclivities for gathering all the loose men about her and his charming spirit of generosity about her society, I could foresee another world war coming.

I went out there for the festivities about three days before the wedding was to take place. He met me at the train and with him was a snappy brunette that would knock your eye out. Boy, she was the original *vis medicatrix naturæ*! One look from her and I felt better myself. But she sure wasn't the girl whose picture he had lugged all over England, France, and the S.O.S. with him. She

was a small blonde! I asked where the bride was and he told me this was her. I choked a couple of times on my Adam's apple and asked again. He stuck to his story and had a perfectly straight face. Then I thought he was crazy, sure enough. Either him or me.

When I got him off to one side I asked him point blank if he was fully equipped mentally. He assured me that he was.

"Do you know what you're doing?" I asked him.

"Certainly," he told me.

"Then where's your old girl, your *fides in mortuis?*"

"Oh, she's all right," he informs me sheepishly.

"Married?"

"Nope."

"Engaged?"

"Nope."

"Turn you down?"

"Nope."

"Then how come?" I insisted. I was real curious.

But it took me the next three days to get the story out of him.

The home folks had been reading about his heroic deeds in the papers for so long that he was sort of a legend. The last they had heard of him was when he joined the Peace Conference and they naturally supposed that he'd been detained over there as sort of a threat to the unruly nations to be good, or guardian of the Fourteen Points. As soon as he got back, the Chamber of Commerce arranged a big banquet in his honour at the country club. Everybody turned out to do him honour and get a free meal. It was a great day and he was escorted through the city by the mayor and the board of aldermen, presented with a big gilded key and had his picture taken placing a wreath on the Lewis-and-Clark monument.

When they finally got to the dinner some admirer gave him a bottle of cognac to prove their appreciation and high esteem. So, just to show the home folks that he wasn't stuck-up over his honours, he drank the cognac. His honours might not have gone to his head, but

the cognac sure did. He didn't remember much about the party after that, but somehow he got out on the porch with a girl that he thought was his Penelope. He proposed and was accepted, and didn't know it was the wrong girl until he read the announcement in the papers the next day.

I asked him why he didn't straighten it out and he told me he didn't want to. He said he found out he had more sense when he was drunk than when he was sober.

He wouldn't supply me with any footnotes or glossary, but I gathered from his conversation that it was something more than the cognac that gave him the big idea out there on the porch. These slow-thinking boys learn fast when they finally get started.

And I'm saying that the boy got over his aberration just in time, because me and his old girl went to the mat after the reception when the punch had given out and there was nothing else to do until train time. Boy, he was lucky! That girl got her technique from Anna Held and her line from Gene Stratton-Porter.



## 66 ABOVE THE BRIGHT BLUE SKY

She certainly made my heart bleed for Paris and London.

Folks out there say he married the girl for her money, but that's a lie. He didn't know she had any until her old man gave him the street railway and an interurban line for a wedding present. The Lord takes care of fools and drunks, you know, so he came in for a double dose of divine grace, that's all. And he'll still need it if that blonde complex ever comes back on him. He'll wish the Marines had charge of him again.

Well, here we are. I go uptown. See you again some day.

# SORE SUBJECTS

*To Captain T. E. Tillinghast.*



## SORE SUBJECTS

ONE fine spring morning in 1919 I was walking up Madison Avenue and ran into George Tilly. He looked a little out of place in a new suit of civilian clothes, but otherwise had not changed since the last time I had seen him, nearly a year before, resplendent in a magnificent uniform designed by a London tailor after the famous coat that was introduced by Joseph.

"Hello," said George as we shook hands and looked at each other in silence for a moment. "I didn't know you were still alive. I thought I was seeing a ghost when I first glimpsed you. I've shed many a tear over you. I heard that you were killed during the push in front of Amiens."

"I was missing for a while," I told him, "but I landed back of our lines and was sent to an emergency hospital. The squadron

moved that day and things got tangled up, and I was reported killed. But I wasn't even hurt, much less killed. Come on and let's get some lunch and sip a stein while we can still get one legally."

We went over to the club and sat down in the grill room. "I don't think much of these reunions as a rule," I told him, "but I'm glad to see you again. I usually try to avoid these rehashes of ancient history. I'm trying to forget the war and become an American again, though God only knows why. The last I heard of you was when you were reported a prisoner of war. How'd you enjoy your little visit to the Rhineland?"

He gave me an ugly look. "Don't try to be funny," he told me sourly.

"Excuse me. I didn't know it was a sore subject."

"Well, it is. Have you ever had a stone bruise?"

"Not since I was a barefooted kid," I told him.

"Ever have fallen arches?"

"No."

"Ever have corns on your instep?"

"No. Why?"

"Then you can't appreciate sore subjects. Look." He held up a foot for my inspection. It was incased in a sort of glorified bedroom slipper.

"What about it?"

"That's what I brought back from Germany."

"How come?"

"It's a long story. Order some food and drink and let's get our feet in the trough. All I got out of the war was a taste for hard likker and a pair of sick dogs."

The waiter took our order and curiosity got the better of me.

"How'd you get the flat feet?" I asked.

"Walking."

"Did they make you walk?" I persisted.

"No. It was my own goddamn fault."

"Spin us the yarn," I insisted. And this is the story he told me:

Oh, I was out on patrol one day with four

other planes over the other side of Cambrai looking for two-seaters. We had a top flight of six planes up above to protect us, all Sopwith Camels. We saw six Fokkers messing about in the clouds and decided we'd suck them down on us for a dogfight. The Fokkers didn't see our top flight and swallowed the bait. They came down on us like a ton of bricks and it looked as if we were going to have a frolic as soon as the others came in. But our top flight was composed of young gentlemen who had business to attend to after the war was over and they didn't come down as they should. The result was that we got licked badly. Whitey was killed right at the first. I saw him go down in flames while I was firing at one of the Fokkers, and then two of them got on my tail. I went into a tight spiral to keep them from hitting me but all I could do was to kick my rudder and wait for the top ones to come down and help. But as far as I know they never came down. Then I saw Chick Willis go spinning down. Finally one Hun got in a good burst and my motor stopped cold. I



don't know what he hit, but it did the trick. I went into a spin, and came out in a dive, and tried to glide back; but I was too far over and they started shooting at me again, so I had to go into another spin. I came out of the spin at five hundred feet and pancaked in the reserve lines.

A squad of infantry took me prisoner, before I had a chance to set fire to my machine. One of them was in favour of shooting me on the spot and fired at me once. The corporal hit him over the head with the butt of his gun. I was quite grateful to that corporal.

Then they took me back to an army headquarters and brought me into a German major's office. And there, sitting beside him as calm as you please, was Chick Willis. Chick was sort of dirty and had on a sweater and a soft shirt and his arm was all bandaged up.

"Hello," says Chick, "and welcome. Meet Major Haslacker. This is Lieutenant Tilly, Major." The major shook hands with me pleasantly.

"What happened to you?" I asked Chick.

"Same thing as happened to you," he informed me sourly. "Those yellow curs up above didn't come down until it was too late. I got a flesh wound here. Be careful what you say."

The major smiled.

"Don't worry about that," he told us. "I'm an information officer, but there's nothing I want from you. We know what squadron you're from, we have the number of your planes, and we don't care about your names." He spoke good English.

"The major," Chick explained, "tells me that he used to sell dyestuffs in New England before the war. He's been very nice to me. Major, do you think you could find another drink for my friend here? He looks white about the gills."

"Certainly," the major said, and rang for an orderly. "Before you go back for detention would you like to send a message to your squadron that you're safe? I'll see that it is dropped over to them."

"I don't think I'd better," I told him. "One of our youngsters addressed a note to the squadron after he was captured, and it was dropped over all right, but that night sixty-two bombs were sent over as a postscript, which wasn't so pleasant. He's due for a court-martial if he ever gets back."

"As you please. It's quite customary. The Red Cross will notify them later if you do not care to trust me. We have all the information we want except the number of troops that are ready to embark in your country and the type of guns they will use. And I don't suppose you know that." He smiled at me. "And you wouldn't tell me if you did. Quite right. Here is a drink for us all." An orderly came in with a tray. "To your fourteen points," he added as he raised his glass. We laughed and drank. Then the major excused himself and went out.

"We are in a nice mess," I said to Chick.

"Yes," he agreed. "I wouldn't have willingly selected this method of passing the winter. Thank God I can speak German. And I

understand that they know they're going to lose the war eventually and are getting pretty decent to prisoners."

"Speak German?"

"Sure. Had a German nurse when I was a kid and have always kept it up. Went to school over here for two years. Ought to come in handy now. Did you see anybody else go down?"

"Only Whitey, but I guess they got the rest of 'em, too."

Chick put his finger to his lips and slowly got to his feet. Then he tiptoed over to the wall and looked behind a sign that was hanging there. He nodded to me and made a sign of listening. Then he put his finger over his lips again. I gathered that there was a hole or a dictaphone behind the picture and someone was eavesdropping. So we stopped talking. Those Germans were pretty cute. In a moment the major came back.

"Your guard is ready," he told us, "and I regret I must send you back to prison. Do not think too hardly of us, I pray you. War is

cruel. You may meet hard treatment but remember it is not Germany who invented war—we merely perfected it.” He shook hands with us and then the guard took us out.

We walked a long way, then they put us on a train with a lot of other prisoners and eventually we got to the prison in a little town north of Lille. Anderson and Mandel were there and two or three others of the gang! The prison was an old barracks, and had a high wall around it with plenty of sentinels. There were about four hundred officers there—Belgian, French, Portuguese, British, and about ten Americans, captured along with the British. The food was scarce and pretty bad; but the British outfit was being fed by the Red Cross, and they gave us some of theirs.

I had on a sweater, breeches, and regular long hip flying boots—sheepskin. They took my leather flying coat away from me when I first landed. I tried to get some shoes but couldn't. Leather was the scarcest thing in Germany. There were no shoes to be had anywhere so I cut the flying boots off at the calf.

The best thing about that camp was the likker. There was plenty of it and it was damn good. Chick and I both had some francs in our pockets, and as long as they lasted we stayed well oiled and decided that it wasn't so bad to be a prisoner, after all. At least, you didn't have to worry about being killed.

The Germans worried us some at first about information, but we really didn't have any to give them. Most of the questions they asked us were about the British Army, and they seemed to be more worried about an attack by the Third Army than anything else. They wanted to hang onto Le Cateau until they could get their troops out of the Salient. One officer was pretty nasty and made a lot of threats, but nothing came of it.

I found three good bridge players and managed to pass the time very pleasantly for a couple of weeks, but Chick didn't play bridge and was restless and fretful all the time. He kept talking about escaping, but I told him I was very happy where I was. He got a map from a British officer who had it sewed into

his collar lining, and copied it. Then he gave a Frenchman fifty francs for a dinky little compass.

A lot of the officers had been wounded, and those who were very sick were in a wing over near the outside wall. Chick got permission to go up to see Clayton Knight who was in with a bullet in his leg. There was a corridor with some private rooms on it that were 'right up against the wall, and that gave Chick an idea. Some of the officers had been given their parole and were allowed to go out about the town, and Chick got one of them to buy him some hacksaw blades from a Belgian, and he put them inside his leggins. He kept close watch on the corridor in the sick wing and when a Frenchman died in one room he was all ready. He tied a cord around his arm for two or three hours, and it looked as if it were really swollen. Then he rubbed his eyes for half an hour and went to the doctor. The doctor took his temperature and Chick managed to get the thermometer out of his mouth and rub it up to 104 degrees. The doctor fell for



it and sent him up to the spare room. He told me to get permission to come up to see him.

I went up that afternoon and noticed that there was a guard at the head of the stairs, so I couldn't see what Chick had gained. But when I got in the room I understood it. Just outside the window was the corner of the building, and it was irregular masonry. There was enough room between stones for a toe and finger hold and two stories below was a roof which extended out nearly to the wall. From the roof you could jump to the wall.

Chick had found out that the guard changed at six, so if I could stay until then the new guard wouldn't know I was there.

We got away with it, and so soon as it was dark we started in to cut the bars in the window with hacksaw blades. We only had to cut two and that wasn't so much of a job. It was easy to get down the corner of the building in the dark and over the wall.

I wasn't a bit keen on leaving, but Chick was so set on the idea that I couldn't back out

on him, though I wasn't so sure we could get away with it.

Once we got out, we didn't know what to do. The nearest boundary was Holland, so we started northwest by the compass. We didn't dare walk in the road, so we'd go straight across the fields. And maybe my feet weren't tender! Oh, boy, how they hurt after two hours of rock crushing. We must have covered about ten miles before dawn and then we found a lot of dead leaves in a thicket, and curled up and went to sleep.

About noon we heard a lot of voices and there were three German soldiers about fifty feet from us, talking. They argued a while and went on off.

"They were looking for us," Chick told me. "They've been following our footprints and lost them a mile back. They're going back to pick them up."

"Say, do they have bloodhounds in this country?" I asked him.

"Don't know," he said. "If they do, we're lost."

But the soldiers never came back. We walked on for a week every night, and my feet got worse and worse. We ate raw potatoes and beets and cabbage that we got out of the fields, and finally we got so hungry and tired we just went into a peasant's cottage. They were Belgians and were scared to death. They knew they'd be shot if the Germans found out they were harbouring prisoners, but they fed us and gave us some directions about roads and asked us please to leave at once. Before we left the man told us there was a priest in Brussels who would help us if we'd go to him. So we lit out for Brussels.

The map didn't help us much, and though we did a hell of a lot of walking we didn't get very far. My feet were about to kill me. The boots were loose and my socks wore through and my feet began to get chafed and raw. We only walked at night, and stuck to the fields and kept away from the highways. We knew we'd never get to Brussels wandering around that way at night, so we decided to get rid of our uniforms, though they were the only

things that stood between us and being shot if we were caught. As long as we were in uniform we were all right; but if we were caught in civilian clothes we would be shot as spies at once. That's international law.

We had to spend all day hiding, so we took to hiding near houses. One day we saw a whole family leaving the house to go to town, so we sneaked around and broke in a window and helped ourselves to clothes. We got a pretty good farm outfit apiece, and found some food, too. We left a gold ring of mine for payment and cleared out. I was all right except for my feet. I tried walking in wooden shoes, but it couldn't be done; so I went back to where we had hidden our uniforms and got my flying boots again. Even with them I couldn't make much progress. But now we were going in the right direction because Chick could walk into little towns and ask the way. He saw a big sign offering a reward for us in one town and got out in a hurry.

By the time we got to Brussels my feet were in terrible shape. They were infected and cov-

ered with sores and the arches had broken down. We waited until late at night and sneaked into town. If anybody stopped us we were lost as I couldn't speak German and had on the flying boots. We had arranged that Chick was to do the talking and say that I was his deaf-and-dumb brother.

We found the priest's house, and went around to the back and knocked. After a while we woke up a servant who told us that the priest had been arrested for harbouring fugitives and sentenced to be shot. So we left that neighbourhood in haste.

I was ready to give up. The infection from my foot was making me sick all over, and I could just barely hobble along. I begged Chick to leave me and go on, but he wouldn't do it. We wandered around the town, not daring to ask anyone where to go, and saw several signs offering rewards for us and threatening death to anyone who aided us. About dawn we got desperate and climbed over a wall into a garden back of a private house and went to sleep in a summer house.

When I woke up two German officers were having breakfast in the courtyard about thirty feet from us. I woke Chick up with my hand over his mouth, and he listened to them talking. They finished breakfast and left. Chick whispered to me that they were pilots and were talking about a bomb raid.

Later an old Belgian man and woman came out and sat down to read the paper. Chick listened to them for a while, and then we came out of our hiding place. I couldn't walk at all then. They were nearly frightened out of their wits at the sight of us, and we did look pretty bad. Chick explained to them who we were, and they jabbered like a couple of magpies. One thing they were sure of: we had to leave—and leave quickly. The two German officers were billeted there and might be back at any moment. If we were found there it would mean death for them all.

Chick explained that I couldn't leave, and that we'd be caught and shot if we went out now. The man said in that case he'd have to give us up—it was impossible to let us stay.

Chick argued and pleaded but it was no good—he gave us fifteen minutes to get out. He told us his daughter was there with them, and he had to consider her as well as us. We couldn't very well blame him, but we didn't want to go. I couldn't.

About that time a girl came out of the house and listened for a few minutes to the argument. Then she got in it. She looked at my feet, and told Chick to help carry me into the house. The old man protested violently, but it didn't do him any good—in we went. They took me upstairs and put me to bed in the biggest, whitest, snowiest bed in the world. As soon as I felt those welcome sheets I passed right on out in peace.

The girl got a Belgian doctor to dress my feet and lance a couple of abscesses; and in a day or so, when the poison got out of my system, and I got a little food, I felt better. She brought us up some soup and black bread from time to time, and once or twice some milk. It tasted awfully good. She got Chick some decent clothes and he went out to scout



around. The room we were in was right across the hall from the one the German officers had, so we had to be very quiet. Luckily, they were out at the airdrome most of the day and some of the night, so didn't bother us much.

We were perfectly comfortable there, but we knew we had to get out quick on account of the Belgian family. We'd rather have died on the spot than get that girl in trouble. God, she was a beauty—as pretty as they come! You know those Belgian girls: blonde curls, red lips, blue eyes. This one had 'em all. And she was a buxom lass, too. You know the meaning of the word buxom? It means fat only in the right places. That was her. And as sweet and bright as you could want. Chick started making love to her before he'd even thanked her for saving our lives. I would have, too, but I couldn't speak her language. She and I could converse in French a little. My French was fine in a barroom, where I could always get what I wanted, but was no good in a bedroom. Chick was so crazy over her that he lost track of the war altogether. I was afraid he

was going to murder me to get me out of that room so as not to interfere with his love-making. Finally he forgot his manners and just disregarded me. Oh boy, he was persistent!

The girl told us that the only way to escape was to go up to the Dutch frontier and get across the wire. The Germans had a high-tension wire across the border to keep anyone from crossing it, and had it patrolled by sentries as well. But she said if we would go to a certain priest up near the border he might help us.

But that wasn't any help to us because I couldn't walk that far and there was no chance of a ride. I begged Chick to go while he could and get into Holland, and then I'd come on when and as I could. But Chick wouldn't leave me. Nothing could have persuaded him to leave me with that girl. He was right, too. I didn't want to go to Holland.

Then Chick got his big hunch. Why not fly back? There were plenty of planes there, and we could fly, so why walk? We'd be back at our squadron in an hour and a half. The

only trouble was that we first had to get the plane, and then we had to get down on our side of the line before we got shot down. As soon as we crossed the lines our Archie would open up on us and our planes would attack us and shoot us down. We decided that the only way to do would be to take off just before dawn and try to get across the lines and, on the ground before the sun was up high enough for good shooting.

So Chick went out to the airdrome and had a look about. There were a lot of big twin-engine night bombers out there. And one small two-seater. The two-seater was in a hangar at the end of the line.

At first Chick's idea was that we were to go out and hide in the tail of one of the bombers, and then, after it had crossed the line, sneak up and crown the crew and take charge. But that was bad, for a lot of reasons. In the first place, we'd affect the balance of the plane and might cause a crash. Then we might get caught, and even if we did kill the crew, our own planes might shoot us down. Besides,

neither one of us knew how to fly big planes.

Then Chick decided that we should steal uniforms from the two officers across the hall and boldly walk out to the airdrome and get in one of the planes and take off and land in Holland. But in that case we'd be interned and never get back to the front, and the girl would probably end up by being shot after the investigation over the uniforms.

So we decided we'd just have to steal a plane as we were. Chick wanted to take the girl with us and she said she'd go; but I argued him out of that. What would we do with her after we got back? We'd be back at the squadron, and they wouldn't allow any girls at the front. And, after all, the only reason we were escaping was to get back to the scrap. We weren't ready to go home yet. And if she disappeared it would cause her parents to be suspected. So he gave in.

But one day the officers told her they were going to be gone all night on a bomb raid, which meant there wouldn't be many guards at the airdrome. So we dressed ourselves up in

German uniforms that we took from their rooms. The girl went out to the airdrome with us so she could bring the uniforms back after we got into flying clothes. She hid outside the field, and we walked on in. There was a sentry at the gate and he passed us with a salute. We'd watched German officers so long, we knew all the correct mannerisms.

There was another guard at the hangars and Chick gave him orders to open up the hangars and help us get the plane out. Only the big bombers were out on the raid. We dragged the plane out, and Chick got up in the seat to see if it had plenty of gas and oil. We'd decided to take off by moonlight and fly west till we hit the coast, and then follow it on down to Dunkirk and fly around until our gas gave out or the sun came up, and land on the beach there in a hurry, Archie or no Archie. We could stay out to sea and keep away from the searchlights and Archie. We'd both done a little night flying and had a good chance to get away with it.

Chick told the guard to get us some flying

suits and helmets and goggles. He trotted off and came back in a minute with a supply clerk. The clerk began to ask questions and I could see we were in trouble. Chick winked at me, and I got behind the guard and he went up close to the clerk. The clerk was getting excited and said something to the guard. Just then Chick caught him a wallop on the jaw and the guard tried to bring up his gun as I caught him on the side of his head with a piece of pipe. But his damn gun went off. We had to run for it. The guards came dashing up from all directions, but we ducked into a hangar and out of the back of it and got away. But we knew the game was up then. We beat it back to the house and got off our uniforms and got ready to leave. The girl came back in a few minutes and said the alarm was being spread all over town for two German officers who were spies. We replaced the uniforms in the Germans' room and decided to leave Brussels right quick. The girl wept on both our shoulders and we folded up our tents like Arabs and stole forth into the night.

It took us six days to get to the Dutch border and locate the priest. He was scared stiff and made us go out and hide in some woods. The next night a Belgian came to talk with us. He said he'd send a carrier pigeon over to Holland to a friend, who would come across the next day and take us back.

We waited three days and then another Belgian joined us. He said the only way to get through was to wait until the moon was dark and cut the wire. There were three high-tension electric wires in the midst of a barbed-wire entanglement, and it was impossible to get through without cutting the wires. You couldn't get through the gap where the wires were cut, because the sentries would run to that spot, but when they did we could get across somewhere else, before new fuses were put in to get juice back in the wires.

He took us out the next night and we crawled the last mile to the wire on our bellies.

We went up with the moon shining so we could see, and then waited for it to go down. There was a sentry patrolling for about a



hundred yards in front of us and another one about a hundred yards to the left. They would walk toward each other and then turn and walk back again. This Belgian told us to stay where we were and when we saw a flash to dash across. He wiggled down to where the sentries met and waited until they were at the far ends of their beats. He had on rubber boots and rubber gloves and carried a pair of big wire cutters.

By that time I was scared. A year's accumulation of gooseflesh was shivering all over me and my heart was playing "Yankee Doodle." I wanted to stand up and yell. The suspense was just about to crush me.

We heard three sharp snaps and saw the sparks flying, and the sentries both dashed to the spot. We heard them firing, and then jumped up and climbed over and through the wire. We lost most of our clothes and a lot of skin but we got through; and, in spite of my feet, I did manage to break the Dutch record for the 220-yard dash.

We made for the nearest American Con-

sulate, which was at the Hague, and reported. But they didn't seem to know there was a war on and asked if our families were good Democrats. So we went over to the British Consulate and they took care of us. They fed us, gave us uniforms, and got us drunk, and kept us that way for three days, and then sent us on back to London.

We reported to Eaton Place and asked for orders back to the squadron. They said nothing doing, because escaped prisoners were never sent back to the front, for if they were captured again they would be shot as spies. We said we'd take a chance on that. The Information Office kept us busy for a week answering questions and drawing diagrams. We tried to arrange to get a reward for that Belgian but he had refused to give us his name and address. They told us in London that they were paid by the British Secret Service for their work. We kept the girl part to ourselves.

Jeff got orders for us, finally, to go back to the squadron, and we got a new outfit and

started back. When we got to Paris the Armistice was signed. Now what do you think of that? Can you beat it? After all the trouble we'd taken to get back, they go and stop the war! That's what I call a dirty trick.

He finished and took a bite of chop in disgust.

"Why? Didn't you have enough of it?" I asked him.

"Hell, no," he assured me. "I hadn't gotten a Hun yet. You boys that got some Huns were all right, but I hadn't gotten one, and I wanted one, too."

"Don't you think that escaping from a German prison and walking through Belgium is much more difficult than shooting down a Hun?"

"But that wasn't what I joined the army to do. I wanted to get a Hun," he insisted.

"Forget it. This Hun-shooting business is all the bunk anyway. If our pilots had killed all the Germans they got credit for, we'd have to go over to Germany and help them out with

the next generation. What happened to Chick?"

"The last I saw of him was when we split up in Paris. He and the hotel porter were trying to figure out the train schedules to Brussels, which was now in our hands. That's the last I've heard of him. I gathered that he was going back after the girl. Well, I've got to hobble along and see my podiatrist. Cheerio! Thanks for the lunch and likker."

And he left me.

About three months later I ran into Chick Willis at a benefit dance. We chewed the fat for a few moments.

"By the way," I said to him, "Tilly told me about how he and you escaped from Germany. But what happened to the girl? Did you ever find her again?"

Chick gave me a dirty look. "If you're trying to get funny," he snapped. "I'll punch your damn face for you."

"No, I'm not," I assured him. "What's the matter?"

"Matter, hell!" he told me. "That goddamn son of the desert, Tilly, wired the girl and she'd left Brussels for Paris the day before I got there. He was no linguist when it came to using his tongue, but he must have been awfully good at talking with his hands. And just to think that while I was out running around sticking my head in the lion's mouth to arrange our escape, he was making time with the girl! He'd have been over there yet, wandering around Southern France with her, if he hadn't been picked up A.W.O.L. in February. And I'd have beaten hell out of him if I hadn't been in jail in Paris for the same offence. Now let me tell you something about jails. When it comes to jails, give me the German variety every time! They're clean, airy, and bright, and the jailors are gentlemen. But when it comes to American jails, well——"

The rest of his remarks were lost in a cloud of brimstone and sulphur.

CORNWALLIS, WE HAVE COME!

*To Major Leslie MacDill*

UNIVERSITY OF VICTORIA  
LIBRARY  
Victoria B.C.



## CORNWALLIS, WE HAVE COME!

NO, CRANK it yourself. I've got a couple of floating ribs. Fine. Well-trained flivver! Where'd I bust them? During the Revolution. No, not that one—the Revolution at Oxford in 1917. You never heard about that one? Let me tell you it was some battle! I found more hell at Oxford than Sherman did in Georgia. Take your foot off the cut-out and I'll give you the Bunker Hill-to-Yorktown of it.

I landed at Oxford one damp October evening as top sergeant of an outfit of a hundred and fifty university graduates who had enlisted in the United States Army Signal Corps as privates under the misapprehension that they were going to be officers and flyers. After two months of squads east and squads west at a ground school at home, and a month at Mineola being disinfected and inoculated, we

had headed for Italy. Then our orders got balled up and our officers went to Italy and left us on the dock at Liverpool, with orders to remain in England.

All our money was in lire, all our mail was in Rome, and each and every one of the outfit had a letter of introduction to some pretty little wop by the Tiber.

They didn't have any use for us in England, so they sent us to school again. We marched through the streets of Oxford in battle formation with full armament, but we couldn't locate the enemy, so stacked arms in an ancient college yard that was badly mildewed when Manhattan Island was still being quoted freely at twenty-four dollars or what have you.

There were about twenty-five hundred British cadets at the aeronautical school, and we were mixed in with them wherever there was room for another cot. We were mostly at Christ Church College and there were sixty other Americans over at Queen's College who had come over three weeks ahead of us. Lieu-

tenant Dwyer had chaperoned them over and then gone to London, leaving Bim Oliver in charge. He was a sergeant, the same as I was.

What did we think of the British? We didn't like them. Didn't the British burn Washington and shoot Barbara Frietchie? Didn't they hang great-great-grandfather to a sour apple tree when they caught him practising sharpshooting from behind a fence? Would we go to ground school again? We would not! We already had one diploma from a ground school. Would we fight with the British? Certainly! But not on the same side. An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth. To hell with this noble-ally stuff—three cheers for the Irish!

But you can't fight with men who insist on buying you a drink, so we had to declare a truce. When we found out that we could have vintage champagne with our meals, we recalled what the governor of South Carolina said to the governor of North Carolina, and swore allegiance to the King.

We surrendered to everybody but the

colonel who was in command of the college. He was an officer of the old school, born into the army at an early age, nursed on discipline, and weaned on military etiquette. I think his first uniform was put on with a screw driver. And he had never gotten over his early training; polished rivets were more important to him than casualty lists. Anybody could fight, he admitted, but discipline was the thing, a soldier's *Lares* and *Penates*, his *fidus Achates*, and he cursed the war because it ruined so many good soldiers. Only the Guards came out of the trenches with their boots polished. He certainly passed out double doses of discipline to everyone in his command, and made them like it. All the cadets were afraid of his shadow and would walk a mile to keep from having to pass him on the street. He never passed them; he always stopped them to tell them a few things that were wrong with their personal deportment. They say that General Pershing once stopped a prisoner just back from Germany and asked him where his Sam Browne belt was. If this colonel had been

there he would have sent him back after it.

Even his staff took him seriously and longed for the war again, because his tongue didn't know the difference between a major and a cadet corporal.

But we weren't accustomed to humouring colonels and we didn't like being stopped on the street when we were in a hurry, and having our personal appearance criticized. He stopped one man and asked him why he didn't salute him. The man said he thought he was a sergeant-major. The colonel almost had a stroke. He stopped two men for talking to two girls in the Carfax, and they told him they were too busy to argue with him and walked off. Of course, he couldn't pick two strange faces out of a hundred and fifty, and he had to take it. But he didn't like it.

And for once in his life he didn't know what to do about it. According to the Constitution, no officer of a foreign army can punish an American soldier. That let him out as Lord High Executioner. I was only a sergeant, so I couldn't punish anybody either.

And there was no satisfaction to the colonel in sending to London for an American officer to come all the way up to Oxford to fine a man fifteen shillings for failing to salute or wearing a dirty collar. He kept making formal protests against our presence in Oxford, but there was no other place for us to go, so nothing came of them except that I would be threatened with dire consequences if I didn't always get the man the colonel wanted and make him apologize. The colonel wouldn't admit that he couldn't control any soldier of any army, so he had to grin and bear it. But there was no love lost between us.

One thing saved the day for us in Oxford. Out at Mineola we had been allowed some magnificent sum like thirty-three cents a day by the government for food. Everyone had a car and wanted to spend as much time as possible in New York telling old friends goodbye and new friends hello, so I got permission from the major to omit roll call after the noon drill and not bother about serving lunch or dinner. The money thus saved was invested

in sugar, which we brought along as baggage. For a very wise and charming virgin had driven all the way out to Mineola to tell us that sugar was very scarce in Europe.

When the loyal citizens of Oxford heard that there were three hundred and fifty pounds of good granulated sugar in their midst, they organized a committee of welcome to wait on us and present the keys to the city. Everyone fawned upon us and when we presented a pound to the colonel, he actually wept. After that, whenever we got into a jam we'd bribe our way out of it with a little sugar.

But the colonel didn't like Americans and all he wanted was an excuse to get rid of us. One night he got it.

The first outfit finished their course with such high marks in the examinations and so delighted the commandant of Queen's College that he gave them all passes to go out to dinner Saturday night. The system at Oxford was that no cadet could leave the college after dinner unless he had a pass signed by the officer in charge of the college. He could only



have a pass once a week. The gates were locked at nine every night except on the college's weekly night out. The colonel and his staff had a bad habit of patrolling the town with flashlights and demanding passes from all the cadets they met. The failure of a cadet to have a pass meant back to the trenches as a Tommy, so they usually had them or stayed in.

It so happened that this Saturday was also Jake Stanley's twenty-first birthday, and as he came into a couple of hundred dollars, he wanted to give a dinner party to celebrate it. He was anxious to have it that night because he had some friends in the first outfit that he wanted to have at the party. I told him I thought I could arrange it and accepted his invitation with pleasure.

The afternoon passed off innocently enough, but anyone with half an eye could see by the crowd around the bars that the storm flags were out. I filled out passes for six of us, and we gathered at Boul's where Jake had a private room on the third floor. Jake had in-

vited about ten from the first outfit and one officer from the colonel's staff. The officer wasn't supposed to associate socially with cadets under any circumstances, so came in mufti and asked us to be sure and keep the fact to ourselves. Alan Winslow came along with his brother Paul who was in the first outfit. Alan was in the French Flying Corps and had just run over to see Paul for a few days, all tricked out in red pants and a sky-blue coat. The rest of the first outfit were down on the second floor led by Bim, in person.

Altogether it was a fine party. Cocktails and champagne flowed freely and then we were each served with a two-quart pitcher of ale. There was a cake with candles and Jake arose and announced that he was about to "Tut the Twake." I must have eaten some of it for the next morning my ears were full of icing. Callahan was playing the piano and someone was pouring beer on the works to lubricate it when I slipped away and went back to Christ Church to arrange to get them in and get those passes back. I sent the cor-

poral on guard at the gate to bed and took his place myself. It was some time before the others came in, flitting by me like ghosts, leaving not only their passes but everything else that was in their pockets, and I destroyed the only evidence that they had been out. One man came in without the slightest motion. I thought at first that he was coasting on skates. He came up to the window and a hand reached in his pocket and took out his pass. Then he receded slowly, still without any motion. I thought I had the heebie-geebies and nearly fell out of the window. Then I saw him turn and there was another man behind him holding him up doing the locomotion. That was one way to get in without a pass.

I got the full details of the party next morning. As the evening had gotten cooler, the bunch on the second floor had come up and joined Jake's party and vice versa. A good time was had by all. At eleven they started back for the college and the night was as black as the inside of a derby. They came down the stairs singing and it so happened

that the colonel and Major Adlai were walking up the street about a block away. They saw the figures pouring out of the lighted hallway into the dark street and caught the refrain of "Ballicky Bill, the Sailor."

"My God, Adlai," the colonel exclaimed as his worst fears were realized, "the Americans have broken loose!" He grabbed Adlai and they made a dash for Boul's to curb the riot.

There was one man in the outfit who was a bare five feet in height. That night he was more or less having trouble with his legs, which didn't seem to reach the ground at the same time, and it was found that he required assistance. Two men supplied the assistance and it happened that they were both about six feet four. One got on either side and put an arm under his. They started out well, all of them walking in step, but as they came down the long hallway, the two taller ones unconsciously began lifting higher and higher. By the time they reached the door, the man in the centre was at least a foot off the floor and yet was taking each step with a concentrated seri-

ousness of purpose. This was the sight that greeted the colonel's outraged eyes.

"Stop!" bellowed the colonel. "Who are you? Where are your passes?"

They came to a halt in the dark street and half a dozen more came out and were stopped by the colonel. It was pitch dark in the street, as it was against the law to show a light anywhere at night on account of the air raids, and with the door closed it was impossible to distinguish anything.

"Stop, all of you!" yelled the colonel. "Adlai, give me the flashlight."

As Adlai handed him the flashlight, someone pushed forward and knocked the flashlight out of his hand and took to his heels. The colonel saw red and yelled like a stuck pig. He spluttered and foamed at the mouth. The rest of them stood their ground but the colonel was too mad to question them further and Adlai led him away to compose a telegram to the American Ambassador.

Instead of cooling down, the colonel grew madder and madder, and he was seized with

the determination to find the guilty man and see that he was properly punished—I think he had decided on beheading as the correct thing. So he gathered his staff together and half an hour later he burst into Queen's College with a battery of flashlights and demanded a formation of all the first detachment at once.

Most of the men had been poured into bed and were in no condition to parade. Some were only just straggling in. The colonel was clamorous. Each and every one of the detachment must stand before him! Every man must be present.

They tell me that it was the greatest sight that Oxford ever saw, certainly the queerest. A dark night—only a few stars were shining—an ancient and honourable courtyard, hallowed by famous footprints and scholarly traditions, and sixty American cadets, in all sorts of uniforms or lack of them, trying to get into line, leaning on each other, drooping on doorsteps, and bracing themselves against walls; while an irate colonel and his staff stood

off fifty feet and waited for heaven to strike them down.

A cadet sergeant finally got out in front and attempted to take charge. He was squinting one eye as he had decided that one eye in focus was better than two out of focus, and he walked as if he were on a tight rope.

"Attenshun!" he commanded, and then got the British and American infantry regulations mixed and shouted, "Stand at ease! Right dress! Who ran where?"

Several men in the rear rank were actively ill.

"Open ranks!" he commanded, undismayed. The men obeyed, some at right dress and some with their feet spread apart and their hands behind their back in the British manner. One man in the front rank dug his chin in the ground.

"Call the roll," directed the colonel. "Every man must be here!"

The sergeant turned around as if he had seen the colonel for the first time. He rocked backward on his heels and gazed dumbly at



the stars. He realized that he needed support and reached out to grab hold of a small tree, but he missed it by a yard. The colonel turned his flashlight on him, and he closed his eyes and went over backward into a big lilac bush. There he lay, unable to move, and groaning heavily. Everyone tittered except the colonel, who roared like a gored bull.

Another sergeant, who had been put to bed early and had gotten a little sleep, stepped forward and did his best. He got all the men faced in the right direction and had the dead ones carried off. The line swayed backward and forward like a wheat field in the wind.

Then the colonel started down the front rank interrogating each man. He was satisfied with the answers until he came to Billings.

"Did you run?" demanded the colonel.

"Sir," says Billings, "just what do you mean run?"

"Answer me, yes or no. Did you run?" repeated the colonel.

"Must have a definition, sir," says Billings stubbornly, "you might not mean the same

thing I mean when I say 'run.' For instance, if I——"

"Place this man under arrest," shouted the colonel to Adlai. "I'll attend to him later."

Then he came to Chandler.

"Did you run?" the colonel asked him.

"I wasn't on the third floor, sir," said Chandler; "I was on the second floor."

"I don't care where you were," snapped the colonel. "What I want to know is whether you are the man that ran or not."

"I wasn't on the third floor, sir," insisted Chandler, "I was on the second floor."

"Answer me at once," bellowed the colonel, "did you, or did you not run?"

"I wasn't on the third floor, sir," repeated Chandler doggedly. "I stayed on the second floor all evening."

"Arrest this man, too, Adlai," directed the colonel, as he moved on to the next man.

"Did you run?" asked the colonel.

The man simply reached out and threw his arms around the colonel's neck and gently passed away on his bosom. That ended the

party, and the colonel went home, swearing that, as God was his witness, he'd have the guilty man before another sun set or he'd stand every American up before a firing squad. And a merciful darkness hid the scene as the invincible detachment made its way to bed.

That was the tale I got the next morning before I got my tongue loose from the roof of my mouth. The British officer in charge of Christ Church was much upset because he had found out that at least fifty of my men had been out to a dance the night before. What was worrying him was how they got back in with the gate locked. I couldn't help him out on that because I didn't know either. The colonel was quite out of his head and had sent for Dwyer and turned the matter over to him.

It wasn't long before Dwyer sent for me. I went over to Queen's and found a council of war in progress. Dwyer, Billings, Bim, Chandler, and the two Winslows were represented. The colonel had threatened to complain about Alan to the French Ambassador

because he was present. I knew nothing about it and stuck to my story.

"Well," says Dwyer, "there's this about it. Unless we turn the guilty man over to the colonel, you are all going to get into trouble. So it may be well to offer up a scapegoat. Do any of you know who ran?"

"Yes," says Alan Winslow, the one in French uniform; "if you really want to know I'll tell you, but it is strictly unofficial, and I'll deny it later. I was with him when he knocked the flashlight out of the colonel's hand. It was the British staff officer!"

"In that case," says Dwyer, "I guess we'll let the colonel do his damndest. The first detachment leaves this afternoon, anyway."

"But what am I going to do?" I wailed. "We've got to stay here for three weeks more."

"I'm sure I don't know," said Dwyer, "but I can assure you of my sympathy."

And there were times when I needed it. Bim's sixty packed up and left on the afternoon train for Stamford to learn to fly again. The colonel did not go down to the station to

see them off but everybody else in Oxford did.

That left us in a pretty bad jam and I was sure holding the bag. We lay low waiting for the blow to fall with our necks bared to the axe, and it fell the next day.

It was raining as we marched back from classes the next evening at six-thirty, and I received a message to march to Exeter College. When we entered the courtyard we found all our belongings piled in the centre. And we had a lot of them, too. Each man had two trunks, a suitcase, a bedding roll, a sleeping bag, a mess kit, arms, ammunition, flying clothes, bar utensils, and two months' accumulation of miscellaneous junk and souvenirs. I was told by a staff officer to assign the men to rooms. There were forty small rooms in Exeter for the hundred and fifty of us. And it was dark and wet and I didn't know where the rooms were, and the men were mad and couldn't find their things, and the colonel was mad, and finally I went mad.

I let the men pick their own rooms and sort out their property as best they could. Then we

gathered in the bar to discuss ways and means of retaliation. Any Declaration of Independence would have gotten 150 signatures. And we had 10,000 rounds of ammunition with us, too. But again the situation was saved by British tact. For Exeter College had a bar the size of the one in Grand Central Station, and the whole staff came over, in spite of the colonel, to see that we got enough to drink.

The next morning the colonel sent word to me that Exeter was our oyster and to take care of it, because any damage would be charged to our government. As for discipline, that was up to me. He was through with Americans forever. We could go out once a week at night, but otherwise the gates were to be locked at nine every evening. The first breach of discipline that came to his attention meant a formal protest and a request to London for our departure. He said he would send me one officer from his staff to live at Exeter and sign passes and assist and advise me.

And who do you think he sent to advise and assist me? The very officer who pushed him and ran. All the men knew it, so he was a great help to me. The colonel never found out about it, but I heard that he has never saluted the Stars and Stripes since he learned that Dwyer had been at Bim's party, himself.

The colonel picked Exeter for us because it had the highest stone walls in Oxford and all the windows on the first floor were barred. I thought it was hermetically sealed at first. But one night I wanted someone to help me get my boots off, and as my three roommates weren't about, I went out looking for someone else. And I couldn't find a soul in the place! Not even the staff officer. I went down and had a look at the gate. It was locked tight. I walked around the court. High stone walls a couple of yards thick. Well, it was no business of mine to tuck them in bed after the gate was locked, so I went on back and slept with my boots on. So long as the colonel didn't catch them, I only had a professional interest in the



matter. All cadets were required to wear white hatbands, but there were several squadrons of American mechanics at the airdromes on the outskirts of town, and of course the colonel couldn't stop them. Our white hatbands were detachable, so the colonel lived in peace a while.

We began to like the British ideas and customs after we were allowed to pick them up for ourselves instead of having them shoved down our throats. Most of the men took to carrying gloves and canes. They got to using the British salute and cultivated a moustache of the proper size and spoke with an accent. Some of them even learned to swear in English. Now that is fairly hard to do. Your pukka Englishman has only one cuss word in his vocabulary. The art in his profanity lies in the number of times he can use it in a given sentence and the emphasis he can place on it. The word may only be "bally" but he can get more service out of it than an Irishman can out of two centuries of saints. I remember once I overheard two Tommies on the street.

"Aye, Bill," says one, "what's the bleedin' time?"

"Aft-past bleedin' four," says the other.

It is the custom in all British officers' messes to drink the health of the King once a week. When we found out that we were supposed to participate in this at Christ Church, some of the men were overcome by a burst of democracy and refused to join in the ritual. But after we moved to Exeter and had our own mess where it was not required of us, the men by unanimous vote decided to perpetuate the custom and drink the King's health every Thursday night. I imagine most of them still do it when they get a chance, for they stayed with the British until the fall of '18 and then they protested violently against leaving.

In spite of the colonel, his staff spoiled us. Many a time I dashed up to some room to stop the noise, only to find that the noise was being made by some member of the staff. They were fine fellows, but they weren't used to mixed drinks. When I would interrupt one of them giving a demonstration of a

trench raid down the hall, I would either have to retire in defeat or join the attacking forces. One night, in the dark, I found myself bawling out a major for kicking washpans around the court. I had to apologize and help him kick a few.

Then one day the colonel sent for me and my worst fears were realized.

"Look here, sergeant," he said to me, "it has been reported that one of your men was seen kissing a barmaid in the R.F.C. Club. Now that won't do! It's not cricket! Bad example to my young cubs! I can't pass up such a thing. My discipline is about bashed in as it is, but I can't have my cadets kissing barmaids! Yes, I know that the barmaids are really polite young ladies of the town doing war work and quite our equal socially, but, damn it, they are barmaids, and officers do not kiss barmaids. That's a job for enlisted men. I can't have it! I am trying to make gentlemen out of sows' ears—temporary gentlemen, at any rate. You American cadets are the best your government had to send over, the pick of your manhood.

But these cadets of mine are only what's left over after three years of slaughter. And, another thing, your men must stop chaffing my instructors. One man was sent to me last week for not paying attention in class. Just because he designed some of the planes we are now using, that is no reason why he should not listen to my corporal lecturing on aërodynamics. I didn't put him in the army as a private, but if he stays here, expert or no expert, he's got to listen to my instructors. Our classes are arranged for the youngsters that we have to train and not for university men such as yours. I've got to carry on here with my job and I won't have your men setting a bad example. The man who kissed the barmaid must be found and punished. I leave the matter to you. If you can't find the guilty man, I shall be forced to take a hand and report the matter to your headquarters."

I went back and lined up the outfit with a heavy heart.

"Listen here," I told them; "there's another strafe on and the colonel is boiling. One of

you men has been seen kissing a barmaid. The colonel has gotten hold of it and wants a scalp. He says he's either going to have the man or take it out on the whole bunch. He will probably withdraw all our privileges and give us extra classes. Whoever did it ought to be man enough to own up to it and take his medicine. So, whoever is guilty step two paces to the front."

There was a deep silence for a full minute and then fifty-four men stepped two paces to the front.

I went back to the colonel for more details. On the way I ran into Major Adlai.

"Ah, I say," he began, "haven't you some jolly boxing talent among your jolly charming fellows?"

"Yes," I admitted, "there's an amateur champion heavyweight who is supposed to be pretty good and there're a couple of pretty good lightweights. I used to do a little boxing myself. Why?"

"The colonel, jolly old chap, you know, is a bit balmy on the subject. He wants to get up a

jolly boxing tournament, you know, but he's got no jolly talent. Get him up a jolly good fight, and by Jove, he'll jolly well eat out of your jolly old hand. He's jolly bloodthirsty, you know."

"Thank you very much, sir," I said, seeing a great light through the heavy fog.

So I put the matter up to the colonel. He took hook, line, and sinker at one jolly gulp. When I told him of the professional talent we had, he forgave me all fifty-four kisses in a paroxysm of joy. According to my story, we had every fighter that had ever won a fight, except Jack Johnson. So the colonel and I buried the hatchet and got out the boxing gloves.

The next thing to do was to find some boxers. I put the matter up to the men and they turned it down flat. They complained that they were all out of condition and had no boxing clothes and were afraid that if they got hurt it would knock them out of flying. But when I told them what the prizes were going to be, they changed their minds and I got thirty en-

tries. The winner in each class was to get leave over the week-end and expenses to London and back—that is, necessary expenses.

After cracking up the affair so much, I had to enter myself. I didn't think much about it until I went to weigh in. Then I got an awful shock. I found that I had gained so much during those two weeks of stuffing on the boat and a month's guzzling at Oxford that I was no longer in the 155-pound class where I used to box, but in the unlimited!

And, worse still, I drew the amateur heavyweight champion of the United States in my second bout. It was then that I paid for my sins. My first bout was easy because I drew a cripple who had never done much boxing.

When the champion and I got in the ring, we got a good laugh. Someone yelled at me, "Hey, David, where's your slingshot?" The colonel was referee and gave us instructions. He said he wanted to see a fight, not an exhibition. He should have said execution.

As soon as the round opened, we both took a swingateach other. The champion missed and,



as I landed, his foot slipped and he fell flat on his face. Everyone cheered wildly because they thought I had done it. I had an awful sinking spell, for I knew what had happened and I had a hunch what was going to happen next—I saw Nemesis climbing over the ropes. The champion arose, scowled at me, and took a long right hay-maker swing. I saw it coming a block off and had my guard up when it arrived, but my guard was about as useful as an anti-aircraft battery in an air raid. He knocked me right over the ropes.

He didn't catch me during the rest of the round and I was still leading the race in the second when the colonel stopped us.

"Come, come," says he, "no stalling. Fight! You must fight! You are both being too good to each other!"

Then the champion knocked me under the ropes on a long skid across the ring.

In the third round he knocked me through the ropes.

He got the trip!

After that the colonel was our friend. Every

bout was won by an American, and he had three nice evenings of gore. He sure was bloodthirsty. He was so pleased by our performance that he not only gave all the winners a trip to London, but all the participants as well. But I was too bruised to go.

Then somebody gave the colonel a brilliant idea. He couldn't get rid of us by saying how bad we were, why not try it by saying how good we were? He reported to the brigade that we were so good there was nothing more to teach us. The brigade fell for it and ordered us up to a machine-gun school. That didn't do us any good but it certainly pleased the colonel.

A hundred and thirty were to go one afternoon and twenty were to stay and go with me the next day. That afternoon, after the big bunch had gone, Bob Kelly and Jake Stanley came to me and announced that they had arranged a little party with the club barmaids at a roadhouse, and now that I was relieved of the job of being a good example I might as well come out and cavort a bit. This seemed

entirely in order to me and I accepted with pleasure. I girded my loins and went out on the town to see what I had been missing for the past six weeks.

It was well after midnight when we wandered back to the college, and of course it was locked up.

"How'll we get in?" I asked.

"Follow us," they told me. We went around to the far side of the college that fronts on another street back of the Sheldonian Theatre. There was a large tree growing in the rector's garden on the inside of the wall, and one limb grew out over the wall. Jake mounted our shoulders and grabbed the limb and pulled himself up on it. Then Bob stood on my shoulders and got up. Their combined weight pulled it down low enough for me to reach it and I pulled up and got my legs around it. All would have been well but Jake got to laughing and shook the limb. It broke! I landed first in a sitting position on the flagstones with the limb across my stomach and Bob sitting on top of the limb. Jake caught

another limb and was yelling for help, while I was struggling to get my breath. He finally fell, but on the inside of the wall.

Bob and I got our breath and finally got in and sneaked through the rector's garden. That explained all the dirty looks I had been getting from the rector.

We found the British staff officer sitting in our room finishing up a bottle of port.

"Hello," I greeted him, "I've got good news for you. You won't have to worry about any more of your young cadets getting in and out at night. We just broke the limb they use, and ingress and egress by that route will henceforth be impracticable!"

"My God," said the officer, "you don't say so! Now how in hell will I get in at night?"

I couldn't tell him.

The next time I took a bath I noticed that a couple of ribs were busted loose and floating. Floating in port? No, you damn fool!

5618

*To Col. Harold Fowler, M. C.*



**H**ENRY walked down to the hangars and inspected the six machines that were under his care. Three of them were ready for the patrol, lined up facing the hangars with the chocks in front of the wheels and the ailerons wedged with little blocks. Two of them were just inside the door of the hangar with their crews digging into their bowels feverishly.

"Sergeant," called Henry.

"Yes, sir." A big burly figure came out of the cockpit feet first and landed in front of Henry at salute. The sergeant was a pipe fitter in civil life, and being six feet five of muscle and bone he was very particular about whom he saluted. But if he neglected majors and colonels, he made up for it on Henry. He saluted Henry as a matter of punctuation.

"What's the chances, sergeant? Patrol in half an hour."



"You can have this one as soon as we get the new magneto timed. 5684 has a busted cylinder. Gonna put a new motor in it. Won't be ready until the early patrol. Gonna work all night on it. 3716 is waiting on a new centre section. 5618 is ready for you."

"All right, carry on."

Henry walked over to C Flight's hangar to talk to Johnny Warren. Johnny was to lead the top flight—five machines above to protect him from a sudden swoop of Fokkers.

Johnny was looking over his log books and swearing at the machine-gun officer who was alibiing stoppages.

"Say, for Pete's sake, what're we going to do?" Johnny complained, dismissing the machine-gun officer as beneath contempt. "My men have been working all night, and I only have four machines ready for this patrol."

"Yea, and I got four," Henry told him. "What does the colonel expect from us, anyway? They give us washed-out British planes with worn-out motors. When I get to 13,000 feet, I haven't got enough compression to blow

out a match. Then they send us out to fight new Fokkers just as if we had S.E.'s. My men have to work day and night to keep four out of six planes in the air. Why don't they give us some extra planes? They've got plenty."

"They're worn out, too."

"Well, they'd be better than nothing. Wish I had a couple of spare Camels."

"A Flight's got one."

"Yea, the C.O.'s. He never flies so they sneak it."

"That's where I missed out—letting A Flight take the trouble to look after it. I could've had it in my flight."

"You're a bright boy. You knew it would be extra work so you ducked it. Why don't you persuade the colonel to keep his Bristol over here. Then you and I could go up and shoot down Huns like gentlemen. I'm tired of being chased all over the sky. Self-defense is a fine thing if you kill a man at home, but it's not so much fun over here. Sooner or later your defense will konk."

"Yea, I'm tired of fighting from under-

neath too. That's why I want to do a little arranging. I want to catch a Hun below me for a change."

"Say, don't get ambitious. I'll take my Huns where I find 'em without trying to improve on God's arrangements. Take it easy."

"All right. All right. I'll be careful. Now listen. I'm going over at 13,000 feet. There's not much wind, and I'm going about ten miles over and turn south. I want you to stay high and keep back close to the lines. If you see me get leapt on, don't come down. I'll come back under you. Unless I miss my guess there'll be a layer of Huns up high trying to do the same thing they did yesterday. Well, I want you to leap on the top layer. See? They'll dive on me, of course, and you can come on down after them, and we'll both get a crack at them."

"Say, listen, Henry; go easy."

"I will. All you've got to do is to make sure nothing gets between us while I'm over there. They've got the sun with them, and there's sure to be a lot of them out. Particularly after

what they got away with yesterday. That bunch yesterday was part of the Baron's old circus so that means they've moved sixty planes up opposite us. They always get the new planes and motors first. They're a stout outfit. Get the pick of the Hun pilots and move up and down the line wherever the dirty work is going on."

"All right. I'll take off first and go on up through any clouds."

"All right. Let's go on out and get it over with."

Henry walked back to his hangars. He was tired, very tired. Maybe he'd feel better after he got up.

His pilots were assembled in the office getting into their flying clothes and studying the map.

"What's up this morning, Henry?" his deputy leader Ben Thomas asked him. They were all nervous and jumpy and looked at him appealingly. Their lives were his to waste or save. His judgment, his skill, his eyesight were their only hope.

"Oh, usual O.Pip," Henry told them casually. "Only got four planes. I'll take Ben and Smitty and Ham. But listen here all of you. I don't want any splitting up to-day. I want a close formation. And I mean a close formation. I want you close enough to read the numbers on my rudder. I'm going to throttle down to 1200 revs and I want you close enough to talk to you. When I hold up my right hand that means I'm going to open up, and I want you to be right with me. And after I get open I may dive some. Stick close. If the Fokkers dive on us, don't anybody try to fight. If they get close enough to open fire, I'll pull up and climb back after the closest one. Ben will come with me, and you two rear men go under us. Then pull up, and we'll come back under you. Then get in formation again. Get it? I'll promise you I won't let you get hit if you stick to me. Stick to me; stick like a plaster."

Henry was getting into his flying suit. He was wearing slacks, a white shirt, and a

sweater. There was nothing to show that he was an officer or even a soldier. He put on a pair of heavy fur overalls which had a big fur collar up to his nose. Then he pulled on a pair of sheepskin boots and a fur helmet and walked out to his plane. His mechanics greeted him with great pride in their eyes and buttoned him up carefully. He put his goggles in his bosom under the fur to warm them, so they would not fog up from the heat of his face when he put them on. The mechanics lifted him into his plane and buckled his safety belt across his waist. Then they adjusted the shoulder yoke that was his own invention—two heavy straps over his shoulders and down his sides to the seat to keep him in position behind his gun sight when the plane was upside down. His guns were focussed so that he needed only one sight for both of them, and it was bolted to the fuselage in front of his face so that he sighted his guns by sighting the whole plane. And he only used one trigger for both guns; that was

mounted on his control stick. He had two pairs of gloves, one silk and one fur and leather. But he didn't put these on until he had surveyed his cockpit carefully and tested his gadgets.

He was so tightly fastened in now that he could move nothing freely but his feet and hands. His feet were on the rudder almost level with his waist and his hands could just reach the two feed-blocks on his guns. He loaded and unloaded both guns and then tested his synchronized gear to see that his guns fired at the right time to miss the propeller blades. Everything seemed to be all right. The dust cover on his telescopic sight was in working order. There were his tools at his hand, a small aluminum hammer and a forked gadget. A spare lock was in its little pocket. He looked at his gasoline line cocks—five of them—all turned right. Switches off—there were his signal pistol and four cartridges. He glanced in his box. There were pencil and paper, cigarettes, a bar of chocolate, and a flask. He adjusted his goggles and



put on his gloves. Then he shook his control stick and kicked his rudder to see that his controls were free. All this without the slightest mental effort. He had been doing this twice a day for five months now. He had systematized the process until it was automatic.

An orderly came up and saluted and held out a box.

"Has the lieutenant any papers on his person that might be of value to the enemy?" he asked.

"No," said Henry. The orderly saluted, about-faced, and repeated the question to the pilot in the next plane. So on down the line of machines.

He wished they would hurry up and get started. It was hot in all his furs. But at 13,000 it would be zero. He had a silk stocking tied over his nose and mouth to keep them from getting frost-bitten. Funny about that stocking. . . .

He waved to Johnny as C Flight taxied forward from the line and took off.

A mechanic sprang up in front of his motor.

"Switch off," the mechanic shouted.

"Switch off," called Henry, and the mechanic spun the propeller around.

"Contact," shouted the mechanic. It was his sergeant. He never permitted any other mechanic to touch Henry's machine.

"Contact," shouted Henry.

The motor started with a sharp explosion and settled down to a steady whir as Henry adjusted his carburetor mixture. Two mechanics held the wings while he opened the throttle wide. 1350-1375 the tachometer showed. He tested first one magneto and then the other—both all right. He throttled back until his motor was idling. How tired he was!

He nodded to the mechanics on the wings and they pulled the blocks out from under his wheels. He opened the throttle and rolled forward slowly. His sergeant stood at salute; Henry waved good-bye to him and opened his throttle. He glanced at the wind cone and turned into the wind and stopped. His other three machines took up their positions behind him in a letter V. He looked up. There was

Johnny at 1500 feet. He raised his right hand and opened the throttle—the field was skimming by beneath him—a bump and he was off, swaying slightly. He pulled around in a graceful left-hand climbing turn and flew back over the field. Until he reached a thousand feet he stayed over the field. If anybody had trouble they would have no difficulty in getting back into it.

Nine minutes later he was at 8000 feet, climbing slowly eastward to the lines. There was a heavy layer of clouds at 9000 feet and he watched Johnny take his three men up through a gap in them. He picked a big gap himself and circled up through it while his men strung out in single file behind him. Above them the sun was shining brightly, so brightly it nearly blinded him. Below were a million woolly puffs sailing calmly by—endlessly. Here was another world—boundless—absolute. He was alone with the sun. The ground was not visible except in occasional spots through breaks in the clouds. He flew by the sun now, keeping his nose toward it.

He loaded both guns methodically. My God, he was tired! And in ten minutes he must be alive—keen as a blade. Eight lives depended on his mind, his sight, his concentration. He fired both guns to warm them up. O.K. He tested both magnetos. O.K.

As he climbed higher he could see the ground better. The gaps showed a large slice of landscape below. At thirteen thousand he crossed the lines and bestirred himself. There were only a few broken clouds below now.

He swept the sky on a level with his eye and saw nothing. Then he began systematically to search above him in layers. Every sector of the sky he studied carefully. Johnny was at 15,000. Down south was a patrol of ten planes coming in at 16,000—evidently the early morning patrol going home. Everything quiet.

He squinted and put his thumb up before his eye and studied the sun long and carefully. He couldn't look at the sun itself, but he could hold his thumb over the burning ball

and look toward it. There was nothing up there.

He tilted his machine first to the left and then to the right and looked below him. He was so tightly strapped in that he could not lean over the side. Besides that, the cold wind froze his cheeks when he looked out from behind his windshield. Nothing below. He warmed up his guns again.

This he repeated every three minutes in detail. Every section of the sky, above, below, and at his level, he studied carefully. Where were the Fokkers?

For ten minutes he climbed slowly, headed east into Hunland. The lines ran north and south on that sector. Never was his machine on an even keel for a second—he was twisting and turning constantly to be able to see at a different angle. The centre of his top wing was cut out entirely so that he could see up and ahead, and he had a mirror under his windshield so that he could see his men without turning around, but he could see nothing straight ahead or below and forward.

Far ahead and five thousand feet below he saw a tiny black speck against the white background of clouds. He watched intently, and his eyes picked up a bright flash as the sun was reflected on its wings. A two-seater, probably. He fired both guns and shook his plane fore and aft. Then he turned and pointed his arm down toward the two-seater. The others fired their guns. That meant they saw it too and agreed with him that it was a German two-seater.

There were two black balls of smoke in front of him that grew in size tremendously—like genii. Archie! He laughed. Well, it was about time! He counted fifteen and turned south. There were four more bursts to his left. He counted fifteen and turned southwest. Four more bursts to his left. He counted fifteen—for that was how long it took a shell to reach him from the gun—and turned south again. This he repeated a dozen times until the Archie battery gave it up. All they wanted to do was to signal and point him out to their

own planes. The two-seater disappeared through the clouds.

Meanwhile he was still studying the sky. There was Johnny all right. He could just make out four specks against the high clouds which were floating somewhere between twenty-five and thirty thousand feet.

How tired he was! If he could only just stop looking for five minutes! His mind flinched from the terrific concentration.

But he must not let down for ten seconds. It might be all over if he did.

He was going south now, twelve miles across the lines and parallel to them. The sun was white in its intensity. His eyes were sore but he looked steadfastly at it, squinting around his thumb. So this was what they were going to teach the boys at home to do by lecturing to them on military etiquette! Bah! Texas daredevils! Why didn't they send them on over? They were too valuable as instructors, eh? Why let four hundred men do all the fighting for ten thousand? Why kill off every



fighter? They could have his place any time they wanted it. God, he was tired!

Suddenly he saw a speck. Was it a speck? He looked again and changed his course to the west. Yes, there was something up there between him and the sun. How many, he couldn't tell. He fired his guns and pointed up. No response from his men. They were all asleep. Fools! Couldn't they even take the trouble to look? They didn't think much of their necks. He waved for them to come up close and raised his right arm. He was alive now—there was no more tired feeling. His heart had speeded up and his breath came faster as he pushed back his goggles—no goggles on while firing. He was the war horse sniffing the fray.

He opened his throttle wide and turned slightly back toward the south. He didn't want to appear to be running. He put his nose down a little, and turned a little more to the west. He looked back but could see nothing for the sun, so turned south again and held up his thumb. There they were! Four of

them. The same game! How many more up above? Soon see.

He turned back toward the lines and put his nose down farther. 110—120—130—140—150 miles an hour; that was fast in those days. His plane would only do 100 level. It vibrated badly. Were the Huns coming down? Yes, but cautiously. There were the others—high above—must be at 17,000. Well, he must get them down under Johnny.

One of his men was lagging behind. He slowed up to permit him to close in. Bloody fool—to lag behind at a time like this! That's what the Fokkers wanted—to leap on a straggler.

The four Fokkers were coming down fast now. Four to four. All right. They had the sun and the height. Must get them down. Nothing else in the sky. Not a plane to help!

One Fokker was in range now. He opened fire at the rear man who had fallen behind fifty yards. Henry pulled up sharply, did a quick climbing turn, and faced the Fokker head on.

As he did so he opened his sight cover and pressed his trigger. Both his guns spat a stream of lead. The Fokker held his fire a second too long and enabled Henry to get on a level before he saw him. Henry was firing wild. The Fokker went on by under him. He was tempted to half roll on top of him and get him—that was the fighter's instinct—but he remembered those others high above and held his altitude. Ben was behind him and he turned back to the lines. There were his other two 500 feet below and a mile away. He turned toward them. Two more Fokkers came down after them and they dived with engines full on. The other two turned back toward them and the Fokkers pulled up as Henry and Ben dived under their protection. In thirty seconds they were back in formation and headed toward the lines again.

Henry looked at his altimeter . . . 9000 feet. His compass was spinning around so he got his direction from the sun. There were the lines five miles away. The wind was neutral. He would fight now.

He turned north and began to climb a little. The Fokkers were hovering 2000 feet above and a mile to the east of him. He looked up to locate Johnny. No sign of him but he knew he was up there somewhere watching those high Fokkers. Did the four Fokkers see Johnny? Probably not. All right, here goes!

He turned east as the four Fokkers started their dive and put his nose down to pick up speed. As they got without range, he turned south in a narrow circle. Fine, the Fokkers were just at the wrong level. They turned and manœuvred to come in on the two rear men. Henry turned around slowly to the right. The Fokkers were level and ready to open fire. So was he. He took one head on. They were both firing. The Fokkers turned and so did Henry. Another Fokker flashed by him firing at Ben.

It was every man for himself now—a dog-fight. What was going on up above? He was firing but glanced up as the Hun he had in his sight turned. There they come, four more Fokkers. Fine. Hurrah! And there came Johnny down from the west to pounce upon

them. Eight to eight, only five miles over, and he had the advantage of the top flight. The four other Fokkers arrived just as Johnny opened on the tail one. Everybody pick his man and stick to him!

One gun stopped. His throttle hand went forward automatically and cleared it. His motor was spluttering. He changed his adjustment. The other gun stopped. He cleared it. He saw a streak of yellow sparklets go by in front of him. Where did that Fokker come from? He kicked his rudder, cleared another stoppage and half rolled. So did the Fokker who was firing at him. Henry caught a glimpse of him and noticed that he had a streamer on his rudder.

"Ah, ha, the leader," thought Henry. "I'll get you, old top, and end this tricky stuff right now for good and all."

He was about to open fire when he looked up to see what was going on above. My God, there were ten more Fokkers up above! Where did they come from? So that was it!

Henry let up on his triggers and looked about him. Everybody was free. He grabbed his signal pistol and fired a red light into the air. The eight Fokkers were to the east now, waiting on the ten above to come down, but Henry turned quickly and dived toward the lines. They all followed him in one close formation. The lower Fokkers were not quick enough to cut him off and only took a crack at a straggler who promptly dived.

Back of the lines they restored the formation at 3000 feet. Too late to climb back up again—the Fokkers would watch them, anyway. Look for a two-seater and go on home.

Henry climbed back to 5000 feet and followed the lines north. He crossed over and enjoyed watching the Germans pull down their balloons. He made a feint at one and was delighted to see the observer jump out. Good fun, what? Occasionally he got a little Archie. Once he saw the flash of an Archie battery on the ground and he turned and dived on it, firing both guns. The battery ceased firing.

Where were the Fokkers? Up high. They didn't want to fight Camels down low. Wait and catch them up high.

An hour and three quarters gone. Time to go home. He waggled his wings and waved both hands. Everybody turned toward home. Henry dived and fired his remaining ammunition into the German trenches from 200 feet and scooted back. He laughed as he saw a bullet hole appear in his right wing. Good shot, Jerry. Gosh, it was hot down low!

He dropped down to the tree tops. There was a long straight road below him. Not a bend in it for miles—open flat fields on both sides. He dropped down into the fields and flew along parallel to the road with his wheels not twenty feet above ground. The road was packed with troops. They all waved to him. He waved back. It was dusty so he pulled up. There was the canal. He dropped down into it. The banks were higher than his wings as he rushed along with his wheels a foot above the water. There was a canal boat. See the man lie down flat on it! Well, he'd bet-



ter. He pulled up over a bridge and some wires, then dropped down on the other side. He cut across a meadow, flew between two haystacks, hurdled a fence, and cut his throttle in time to sideslip and land in front of the hangars.

The mechanics came running out to meet him and held his wings while he taxied in.

The others were already back, standing around taking off their flying clothes or examining their planes.

His sergeant stood at attention as the mechanics helped him out of his harness and onto the ground.

"Did you get anything, sir?" he asked.

"No," Henry told him in disgust; "and I might have, if I'd hadn't had six stoppages. Send me the gunnery sergeant and see how many bullet holes I've got."

"Eight," one of the mechanics told him, "but all of 'em bad shots. Nothing near you, sir."

Johnny came strolling over as he was taking off his fur overalls.

"Damn well done, you poor fool," Johnny congratulated him. "You've got a hell of an idea about being careful. We got out of that just in time. If we are going to fight Fokkers, we've got to have more planes to do it with. Did you see those top Fokkers—the third layer?"

"No, did you?"

"No, not till it was too late. Good thing I didn't. I'd have stayed up to keep them off you and let you fight it out with the eight."

"Well, that would have been all right," Henry told him. "We were licked before we started."

"You said a mouthful. We were licked before we left the ground. Now, remember that the next time."

"It's your turn to lead next time."

"All right. I'll lead a patrol on this side of the lines for a change."

"Suit yourself. Did you get anything?"

"No, didn't have a chance. What about you?"

"Nope. Too many stoppages. What about

those Fokkers? Aren't they better than the old ones?"

"Sure. One pulled right away from me in a turn and the old ones couldn't out-climb me below 13,000."

They walked over to the squadron office to make out combat reports and tell the C.O. there was a war on.

The sergeant came in to tell him that one of his spars was shot through and his plane would need a new wing. That meant only four machines for the next patrol. Henry swore softly. The sergeant, feeling the inadequacy of Henry's vocabulary, assisted him with a few choice expressions from the plumbing trade while standing rigidly at attention.

How could he be expected to manœuvre four planes when he should have six? How could he act as decoy when he only had four planes above to get the game? Four or even two machines more meant victory or defeat in a dogfight.

The next day the infantry was advancing and Henry's squadron was detailed for ground

strafing. They were sent out in twos with four little bombs strung under the fuselage. They crossed the lines low and flew over the enemy's territory to find targets for their bombs. Then they raked the enemy lines and support area with their machine guns.

Henry and Ben went out together for the third trip. They were headed for the Cambrai-Le Cateau split-ear road. Troops had been reported retreating on each side of it.

They crossed the lines at 1500 feet and flew down the road on each side of it. The artillery was engaged in a gigantic duel, and here and there a tank was crawling across the ground, but the infantry was under cover.

Then Henry saw something and yelled into the rushing air about him. It was a troop of Hun cavalry two miles ahead. He waved to Ben and pointed down. Ben waved back and they both dived. 1400 feet—1200—1000—800—600—down they came on the advancing column. Flying straight at it, he pulled his bomb release four times and pressed his trig-

ger. Two streams of sparkling lead were pouring into the column which had halted and then bolted. Horses and men were breaking for the fields. Henry pulled up in a climbing turn and dived back. He saw Ben firing into a massed formation at the rear as he raked the ditches where he could see men huddled. The cavalry had ceased to exist and only a mass of horse flesh cluttered the road and riderless horses ran across the fields.

Now to get back. The carbines were spitting at him from the ditches.

He zigzagged and followed the contour of a gentle slope. Out of range of the cavalry now! He kicked his rudder right and left but kept going in the general direction of the lines. Ben was just behind him. God, for a fast plane! His Camel would only do 100. An S. E. would do a 130. A Fokker would do even better. He seemed to be barely crawling now.

Crack—crack—crack! What was that? He turned around as far as his shoulder yoke

would permit. Crack—crack—crack! An ugly square-winged Fokker was firing at Ben. He turned quickly and opened fire on the Fokker. It pulled up. He turned for the lines again. Crack, crack, crack! Another Fokker was firing at him. He couldn't pull up now, there were four Fokkers above, so he went down—down to the tree tops. He was not ten feet above the ground, zigzagging furiously to throw off their aim. They could not stay behind him—he was too low—but they were faster and could pull up and dive at him. There was Ben ahead with a Fokker firing at him casually from long range. It kept him from climbing.

It seemed hours that he followed the ground like a steeplechaser. Lucky he knew how. His skylarking was standing him in good stead now. God, for a fast plane! They were having plenty of time to hit him.

Crack, crack, crack—that damn Hun leader again. Why hadn't he gotten him yesterday? There were the lines; oh God, look the other way for ten seconds! Don't let this

Heinie hit me! He can't miss me. Thud! A spray of gasoline—silence—the motor had conked!

There was an open field below him. He turned, side-slipped and came to rest in a hollow. Crack—crack—crack! The Huns were still firing at him. Balked of their prey on high, they'd get him on the ground. He leaped out and ran for a trench. Who would be in it—Germans or British? Well, any port in a storm. He fell over the parapet and landed at the entrance of a dugout with his mouth full of clay. Welcoming hands pulled him in. A kilted soldier unbuckled his flying suit as he panted from exhaustion.

There was a heavy bombardment on so he stayed in the dugout and drank issue rum all afternoon with the Kilties. They were going to push on the next morning at dawn.

That night he walked to brigade headquarters and found a car going back to G.H.Q. which took him by the squadron. He found Johnny and Ben gloriously drunk, alternately making his funeral oration. In a few minutes



his sergeant came to the door to look at him and make sure he was safe. The sergeant was drunk also. In fifteen minutes Henry was in the same condition, and Ben and Johnny were still telling the world that he was a fine fellow, and they'd burn the pants off any Hun that touched a hair of his head.

The next morning the wing equipment officer was informed of the loss of Camel No. 5618. Henry reported that when he started back it was still exposed to bombardment. The E. O. then transferred 5618 from the squadron records to the Aircraft Depot at Aire and told the squadron to send at once to the A.D. for a replacement. Henry sent one of his new men down to Aire and borrowed a plane from A Flight to go on patrol.

Two days later he was on his way back from a ground strafe and decided to locate his Kiltie friends and stunt for them as thanks for their hospitality. He found them engaged about two miles in advance of their former position and too busy to appreciate any exhibition from him. A few bullets whizzed by

his wings and he came on back, flying low across the shell-torn terrain. He passed over the spot where he had landed and there was his Camel, just where he had left it. He circled low over it and it appeared intact. The shelling had miraculously spared it. Then there was nothing wrong with it but the gas pipe shot through! Apparently the A.D. wasn't going to send for it. He hurried on home with a brilliant idea.

"Can you ride a motorcycle?" he asked the sergeant after he landed.

"I won a race once on a half-mile dirt track, sir," the sergeant told him.

"All right, go get a sidecar from the E.O. Tell him it's none of his business. Put in some tools, a spare gas line complete, and five gallons of petrol. Then come down to the mess for me; we're going on a sightseeing trip."

In three hours they were working on the lost 5618. The main line to the carburetor had a hole in it and the sergeant expertly fitted a new section. Everything else was as it had left the squadron, and with petrol the engine

started at once. The next problem was to get it off the ground. Henry taxied it two hundred yards and found a short road. It was not smooth but it was at least level. A short run along it and he was in the air. In fifteen minutes he was back at the squadron.

Thereafter Henry never had less than five machines on a patrol.

Months later the adjutant at the A.D. walked into the C.O.'s office studying a paper.

"This American squadron has returned its Camels," he informed him. "According to the records they have nineteen planes. But I've counted them three times and I make it twenty."

"Can it be possible they've bred one?" the C.O. suggested, with a smile.

"They've all got our numbers on them. We aren't short any. What shall I do?"

"Got their log books?"

"Only nineteen."

"Check out the odd plane and see when we wrote it off."

The adjutant returned in a few minutes.

"5618 was reported lost in action. We gave them a replacement. Goss investigated and reported the plane destroyed by bombardment on the ground. Here's his report. What shall I do?"

"Do? Use your head. The Americans have presented you with a private vehicle. Thank them for not taking it south with them as a souvenir. Send me Lieutenant Goss."

Lieutenant Goss came into the office later and saluted.

The C.O. eyed him solemnly.

"Lieutenant Goss," he began, "several months ago a Camel was shot down in the reserve trenches near Marcoing and I sent you up to investigate its position and condition. You reported it obliterated by shell fire. Is that correct?"

"I believe so, sir."

"Well, what I want to know is, did you have a nice time in Dieppe that day?"

"Sir, there was a heavy bombardment——"

"Yes, I know. Those girls in Dieppe put

over a terrible barrage, don't they? Well, never mind that. What I want to know is this: If you are called before a court-martial, are you prepared to swear that Camel 5618 was to your knowledge destroyed by shell fire?"

"As far as I know, sir."

"Right-o. Carry on."

And as Lieutenant Goss went back to his office, he mumbled to himself, "Now who would have thought the old man would have been chivying the nymphs in Dieppe? But that's the only way he could have caught me. The old bounder! And I wonder why he never mentioned it before. Must have been ashamed of himself."

9214

*To Sergeant Roy Brooks*





THE afternoon patrol had just landed, and taxied up to the hangar. The flight commander cut his switches and leaped from his plane as soon as it came to a dead stop. He pushed back his goggles and hurried over to another machine without even unbuckling his heavy flying suit.

"Say, James, what's the big idea?" he demanded of its pilot. "What's the matter with you? Haven't I told you not to lag behind after we cross the lines? Haven't I explained to you the importance of a close formation? It isn't because it's pretty and it isn't a drill. You aren't doing it to please me. It's for your own protection as well as for mine. You were two hundred yards behind to-day and I had to turn back for you twice with six Fokkers

sitting over me like buzzards. Then when they came down on us you didn't stay for the fight. What's your alibi? Think fast."

"It's — er — er — this machine, Henry," James stammered, flushing. "I had my throttle open all the way and still I couldn't keep up with you. There's something wrong with this plane. I reported it to the sergeant day before yesterday but it's no better."

"I was throttled down to 1250."

"I was doing 1350 all the time. And I couldn't get above 12,000 at all. When the Fokkers came down I had to make a quick turn and the plane went into a spin. I lost 1000 feet before I could bring it out. That's the truth."

"Get out and I'll soon see whether it is or not."

Henry got in the other plane and the mechanics put blocks under the wheels and started up the motor. The sergeant came over to him.

"You going to take up 9214, sir?" he asked.

"Yes. Is there anything wrong with it?"

"Not that I know of. But nobody likes that ship. They say it's slow but the motor will turn up 1350."

Henry tested the motor for a second and then waved to the mechanics to take the blocks away. He opened the throttle, ran along the ground for two hundred feet and left the ground in a steep left turn. Before he reached 1000 feet he had looped, spun, rolled, and stalled. Then he came across the airdrome a few feet off the ground to test the speed with the throttle wide open.

He landed and beckoned to the sergeant.

"This plane is all cock-eyed, sergeant," he announced. "No wonder it couldn't keep up to-day. I could only do ninety-five level and the wings flopped like an ornithopter. I thought I was going to lose the centre section in that last spin. It's rigged all wrong. Get the crew to work on it right away and superintend the job yourself. I'll try it again in the morning. What chance would it have against a Fokker doing 130?"

The next morning Henry took 9214 up

again. In five minutes he brought it back and landed.

"How was it, sir?" the sergeant asked anxiously.

"Terrible," Henry told him. "It's worse, if such is possible. It's as tail-heavy as a tame duck and climbs like a sash weight."

"That's the best we can do, sir," the sergeant told him. "We haven't any more threads on the turnbuckles and if she's still tail-heavy we'll have to get some new struts."

They walked into the flight office still arguing over the matter.

"Let's see the log book," Henry suggested.

The clerk handed it to him and he studied it for a few minutes.

"Listen to this," he said: "JANUARY 1918, 63 SQUADRON, CRASHED AFTER SIXTY HOURS. SENT TO NO. 1 AIRCRAFT PARK AND REBUILT. FEBRUARY 1918, 40 SQUADRON, THIRTY HOURS. CRASHED, NEW UNDERCARRIAGE AND ENGINE BED, NEW MOTOR, NEW RUDDER AND FIN. MARCH 1918, REPAIRS TO TAIL SURFACES, FUSELAGE RECOVERED. APRIL 1918, CRASHED, PILOT

KILLED. SENT TO 1 A.P. RETURNED TO ENGLAND FOR SALVAGE. REBUILT WITH FOUR NEW LONGERONS AND SENT TO TRAINING BRIGADE. MAY 1918, CRASHED. NEW TOP WING AND LOWER LONGERONS SPLICED. JUNE 1918, CRASHED, PILOT KILLED. REBUILT. AUGUST 1918, TURNED OVER TO U.S. AIR SERVICE. Well, I should think it was about time. The R.F.C. and R.N.A.S. and R.A.F. certainly got their money's worth out of that bus. It's time the French decorated it. Now it's our turn at it. It's so heavy from patching and reinforcing that it won't fly in any direction but down. No wonder it's tail heavy. It's tired! It's an antique, now, a regular museum piece. Let's get rid of it."

"Fine, sir," agreed the sergeant. "I was going to suggest that to you. But how?"

"I'll report it unfit."

He went to the equipment officer's quarters. In ten minutes he was back with a disgusted look.

"Nothing doing. We've tried that before, it seems. The A.P. doesn't exchange stale goods. Now we've got it, we gotta keep it until we

lose it in action or bust a longeron in a crash. The A.P. is run by Scots whose ancestors came from Jerusalem. They won't take back any crashes for repair now unless a frame longeron is busted."

"That oughta be easy," the sergeant suggested. "You gotta couple of new pilots that could crash an ice wagon on a prairie."

"All right. See that they always get 9214 and I'll send them out to practise landings in a wind until a longeron goes."

The next day was very windy, with strong gusts coming up the hollow, and Henry sent his new men out to practise landings and hopefully awaited news. None came. 9214 was on the line and ready for the next patrol. Again it lagged behind, leaving an exposed flank, and forced Henry to throttle his own motor to the stalling point to let it keep up. When he landed he was in a fury.

"For God's sake, sergeant, put a new crew on that plane and do something to it!"

"The only thing you can do to improve that plane would be to give it a decent burial," the

sergeant informed him, respectfully. "Lemme drop a match in the cockpit."

"No. I don't want to have to court-martial you for carelessness. I'll get rid of it. Send the orderly for Lieutenant James and tell him to practise crosswind landings for an hour. Fix a tire valve so it'll leak and then he's bound to nose over. Keep the ambulance cranked up and watch him. He's not very good anyway."

But 9214 bore a charmed life, and when the next patrol took off 9214 was trailing a thousand feet below.

The next day Henry was walking down to the hangars when the commanding officer hailed him.

"Hey, Henry, I just got a message from the colonel," he told him. "There's a balloon over at Marcoing that is directing artillery fire onto our troops and holding up an advance with a counter barrage. He wants us to get it if we have to shoot it on the ground. He sent over after it this morning twice and they pulled it down each time."

"I know that balloon," Henry informed



him. "I had a good look at it last week. They've got it ranged by four Archie batteries and a dozen machine guns and pom-poms. Besides that, the Fokkers have an emergency landing field right near there and they take off as soon as the front lines telephone back we're on our way over. Fat chance we've got to get it! A Camel can't dive fast enough. They'd blow it to pieces before it got down in range of the balloon."

"The colonel knows all that. But he says he's got to have that balloon if he has to go after it himself."

"All right, I won't stop him."

"Never mind that. If he sends over a big patrol they'll pull it down and if he only sends over one plane, the Fokkers'll get it. He's already sent the S.E.'s after it. Here're his orders. He wants you to take five men and cross the lines ten miles north of Marcoing at 5000 feet and act as if you were going after something up there. Nobody will bother you at that altitude."

"Only about eighty Fokkers and ninety-six Archie batteries."

"You'll have to chance that. Anyway you're to get east of Marcoing and come back over it. Then one man is to drop down and get that balloon if he has to tear it up with his propeller. Fill the guns with Buckingham and send along four phosphorous bombs. The five of you will keep the Fokkers off the man who goes down. Understand?"

"Sure. But what if the Fokkers jump on us instead and we have nothing upstairs to help us?"

"What if you fall down and break your leg or you cut your mouth on a glass and get blood poison?"

"You don't want to go with us, do you? I'll let you get the balloon if you insist."

"No, thanks. It's your lead."

"Who'll I send down?"

"I'll leave that to you."

"Thanks. I'm glad you are going to leave something to me."

"I'd suggest your most worthless avigator. But that would be a hard man to pick. They're all so splendid!"

"Yea, I'll miss them, too. I've got two new men I'm going to shoot down myself so I can get replacements. You don't expect this hero to come back, do you?"

"No. He can just land after he gets it. Not even try to come back. It's useless. The colonel said that if the balloon was down low by the time he got to it, to make sure of it if you had to take a second crack. If the first man misses, send another. If he misses, go down yourself."

"That's kind of you. But I don't like those blonde German girls."

"You may learn to. I've heard good men are scarce in Hunland. Better get off as soon as possible."

"All right. See you in hell."

There was one bright spot in the program and he chuckled as he called for the sergeant.

"Sergeant, get out 9214 and load the guns

with Buckingham and put on four phosphorous bombs."

Buckingham was phosphorus-filled machine gun ammunition and was used only against balloons. Of course, if a patrol was out after balloons and a German got in the way they couldn't help it if they set him on fire as well as let daylight into him. And the Germans were so optimistic about Allied balloons that they never went out on patrol without it. The German variety was soft-nosed as well as flat-nosed, and when it hit it mushroomed and made a wound like a shell crater, which, thanks to the phosphorus, never healed.

"Better put a piece of that quarter-inch armour plate in the seat, too," Henry added. "It might stop an embarrassing bullet. But guess it would scare the pilot out of two months' pay if it did. Imagine feeling a kick in the pants at 2000 feet! Anyway, we're going to get rid of this cripple this afternoon so you can begin to put a black border on the log book."

"What's up, sir?"

"Balloon strafe."

"Where're the S.E.'s? Gone to Paris for the week end?"

"Suppose so. The idea of this is to fool the Huns. They don't think a Camel will come down after a balloon now. They think we've learned something from experience. We only lost the last forty-two that tried it. Talk about British bulldog tenacity! The colonel is going to fight it out on these lines if he loses every life we've got."

The five other pilots of his flight came straggling down to the hangar and Henry got them together.

"The colonel wants that balloon over by Marcoing and we've got to get it," he told them. "One man has got to be the matador and dispatch the animal. As a reward for this, he isn't expected back for supper. The colonel says it'll be all right for you to land over there. Here's a chance to spend the rest of the war on Uncle Sam's bounty in perfect safety. We'll protect above and make sure nothing stops you before you get the balloon. Then

land. Don't try to come back. There wouldn't be a chance for you. Who'll volunteer for the job?"

There was complete silence.

"Come on, don't all speak at once. Soft job—make a hero out of you in five minutes—I'll see that it gets to the home papers."

Still there was silence. Henry glanced at his pilots and noticed that their faces were white and their lips drawn.

"Come on," urged Henry. "You should all step forward together. Haven't you ever been to the movies? Haven't you ever studied history? Somebody has to do it, if it's the C.O. himself. You wouldn't embarrass the C.O., would you? Who'd take care of his dog? Well, you'll have to draw straws for it."

He picked up five straws and turned his back to arrange them. Then he turned around and held out his hand.

"One straw has a joint on it. Whoever gets it is going to a beer party."

He held out his hand to James who was immediately in front of him. He'd only done

about ten hours over the lines and had yet to fire at an enemy. He reached for the straws but his hand shook as if he had the palsy and Henry drew back the straws.

"Easy now," he told him. "If you're that bad off, you couldn't get the balloon if you got down to it. Brace up. Say——"

He paused and looked at each man. Then he threw the straws away.

"I've been to the movies," he told them, "and I can't make one of you do what I don't want to do myself. Christ knows I don't want to go down on any balloon—but I'll be the goat——"

"I'm sorry I hesitated. I'll go," James interrupted him. "We can't spare you and I'm not——" The other started to talk now. Each one was willing to go down after the balloon.

"Shut up and get your suits on and study your maps," Henry snapped at them. "I'll dine on schnapps and dachshund to-night."

He turned away and walked over to the ambulance.



"Drive me down to my hut," he told the chauffeur. "I'm in a hurry and I've got to get some things."

At his hut he packed his toilet articles into a musette bag and got his best tunic and Sam Browne belt. He put on breeches and boots and began to look like a soldier. He put in all the cigarettes he had, several cakes of soap, stuffed a big roll of francs into his pocket, and hurried back. He was not nervous; he was simply mad. The idea of throwing away his life on a fool errand like this—making a present of his body to the Germans, lifeless or otherwise! Think of sacrificing the best patrol leader the U.S. Army had just because the fool had gone to the movies. Ass!

He stowed away his baggage and gave his pilots final orders. Two of them had tears in their eyes as he gave them final instructions.

They took off and climbed 5000 feet by the time they reached the lines. Henry was in a hurry to get it over with and headed straight into Germany. They were welcomed with a

shower of Archie. He dodged, changed his speed several times, and turned south. There was Marcoing five miles ahead. He could see the balloon as the sun was reflected from its glittering bag. That was his tombstone: "Here lies Henry"—Steady—this was no time for such thoughts. He whistled a few bars of Chopin's "Funeral March" and changed his course for the balloon.

Suddenly the Archie ceased. Fokkers! He saw them now, mere specks in the distance climbing up beyond the balloon. The Archie gunners didn't want to frighten him away. He worked on south giving the Fokkers time to climb out of his way. They were pulling the balloon down. He turned toward the lines and made a feint of returning so they would stop. He could see where the artillery was firing—a flash beneath him and then a line of shrapnel bursting beyond the lines. They needed the balloon badly to register the barrage and he guessed they would keep it up high if possible. They counted on the Fokkers to protect it.

Here they came. Five Fokkers. Good. Six

to five. He welcomed the fight. Then his heart sank as he remembered he must leave—go on down on that balloon before they pulled it down. He'd better. 9214 couldn't dogfight with all that extra weight.

The Fokkers were closing up. All right. He'd start down under them, they'd jump on him and the others would come in from above at an advantage.

He waved, opened his throttle, and dived in a straight line for the balloon which was now at 1500 feet. 110—115—125—130—140—160, his airspeed indicator showed. The wires were screaming so he could not hear his guns as he pressed the trigger to warm them up. But he could see the crank arms moving.

He looked back and saw a Fokker diving down behind him. And behind the Fokker was a Camel. Good. Somebody was on the job.

The balloon was going down slowly, too slowly. He could see it through his sight now. The sky around him was black. He could see tracer bullets and phosphorous pompoms go-

ing by his wing tips. Archie had gone mad. The area was well ranged. He'd never get through that barrage.

The balloon was getting bigger—it filled his sight—Archie had stopped—too much danger of hitting the balloon now. He saw two observers jump out and one parachute open. Both his guns were going—why didn't something happen? He could see the streaks of phosphorus ahead, he could smell it as he followed in the wake. Why didn't something happen? Surely he was hitting it! Would he have to ram it? All right, here goes.

Suddenly there was a blaze like a flash of lightning and he pulled back on his stick desperately. He was so close he passed through the smoke of the blazing balloon and was thrown out of his seat by the inertia as the plane levelled off. He was doing two hundred and was at five hundred feet. In ten seconds he was out of range of the guardians of the balloon who were firing at him frantically. Where were the Fokkers? He looked back and saw nothing. Then he caught sight of a plane spin-

ning lazily down from above—burning. He couldn't tell whether it was a Camel or a Fokker. Anyway the Fokkers were engaged above. He might make it!

He kept his nose down to maintain his speed. 160—150—140—130—120—110—damn this 9214. It seemed to be dragging an anchor. He had forgotten his bombs—he released them quickly. Three minutes and he would be safe. He'd fool the colonel and cheat hell. He zigzagged on down to the tree tops. The three minutes dragged like hours. 105—100—95—what a plane! He crossed the lines at a hundred feet and throttled his motor. Safe! Thank God for that!

He flew on back to the squadron and landed in front of his hangar. He was the first back. The sergeant rushed out to greet him.

"Glad you're back, sir. What luck?"

"Rotten," said Henry. "I brought this damn ship back."

"You might have been worse off, sir."

The other planes were returning now. Henry counted four circling around the field.

Where was the fifth? Was that the plane he had seen go down?

They landed and Henry met them anxiously.

"James went down in flames. We got one Fokker."

That was the report. Well, they'd gotten the balloon. What of it? Was it worth the loss of a man? No. To hell with the balloon. There'd be another one there to-morrow.

Henry walked over to the squadron office.

"Congratulations!" the C.O. shouted to him. "The colonel telephoned over that the balloon is destroyed and one of the observers killed. He's tickled pink over it."

"Yea."

"Who got it? He wants to send his personal congratulations."

Henry reflected for a moment. Who got it? What did it matter? It cost James his life. James protected him while he did the shooting. It would be something for his folks. . . .

"James got it," Henry announced. "And

just afterward a Fokker got him. I told you it would cost a man."

"All right. Lucky it didn't cost six. Make out a combat report for James, will you? He'll get a citation out of it and when some Congressman back home finds out about it, he'll get the Royal Democratic Medal For Regular Attendance For Fifty-two Sundays And Good Friday. Good show, Hank!"

The next morning Henry was down at his hangar inspecting his planes and cursing 9214. It had come back from the balloon strafe without a single hole in it.

"It's certainly a Jonah," Henry was saying to the sergeant as the crew was wheeling it out of the hangar. "If I had a parachute, I'd take it up and jump out. But I suppose it would land itself and only blow a tire."

But just then something happened. The mechanics had picked up the tail to swing it around and a puff of wind caught it from behind. Up went the tail, down went the nose; another gust hit it as it stood on the nose and over on its back it went.



Henry and the sergeant watched, fascinated.

"It would be awfully fortunate, sergeant," Henry remarked slowly, to give his words time to sink in, "if a longeron were broken. Yes, awfully fortunate."

"I think you are right, sir," the sergeant agreed, "and I think I can see from here that the lower left one is smashed."

"I hope so. I'm going up to the mess. Send me a report up there. Don't let anyone see you do it and don't tell me how it happened."

A half hour later an orderly brought Henry the log book for 9214. Already the entry was posted ready for his signature:

LOWER LEFT LONGERON SMASHED BY WIND STORM. STRUCK OFF STRENGTH U. S. AIR SERVICE AND RETURNED TO 1 A.P. FOR SALVAGE BY AUTHORITY WIRE 13TH WING R.A.F.

Henry signed it with a flourish and invited the entire mess to drink a stirrup cup with him to the departing 9214.

The next morning Henry was sitting in the mess reading *La Vie Parisienne* when an

orderly brought word that he was wanted at the hangar at once.

In front of the hangar, packed on a truck, was 9214, covered with dust. And gazing at it was the sergeant, his legs spraddled, his brow furrowed with thought.

"What's it doing here?" asked Henry. "The E.O. sent it to the park at dawn this morning."

"The five-fingered, four-nozzled, triple-obdurate, double-opposed, single-jetted sons of bow-legged bull fiddles sent this crystalized, soft-annealed, split-bottom, compound-fractured, cheese-lined, brass-bellied ruin of a cuckoo cage back to us, sir," the sergeant seethed. "Rest your eyes on this luscious specimen of Limey correspondence."

Henry took the letter and read:

SOPWITH CAMELS ARE NO LONGER SERVICE MACHINES WITH THE B.E.F. IN FRANCE AND ALL SPARE MACHINES HAVE BEEN RETURNED TO HOME ESTABLISHMENT. HENCEFORTH ANY SQUADRONS EQUIPPED WITH CAMELS WILL MAKE THEIR OWN REPAIRS. YOU WILL THEREFORE PROCEED

TO REPLACE THE BROKEN LONGERON. A NEW LONGERON MAY BE PROCURED FROM 2 A.P. STORES. BY ORDER OF THE COMMANDING OFFICER 1 A.P.R.A.F.

"By the dancing muscles in the bouncing bottom of the belle of Bagdad, by the royal hives of the Sultan's wives, fifty million Frenchmen can't be wrong," the sergeant continued. "Why do they pull that on us? It'll take ten days and ten nights at hard labour to replace that worm-eaten longeron in that flea-bitten Chinese tomato crate. When Moses broke the first ten commandments he had nothing on me for being a twin brother to Balaam's ass. I hope King George loses his lunch. May General Haig have the seven years' itch and pray God Lieutenant General Salmon has a bad dream! I think I'll walk out on this war. Sir, I am going over to the estaminet and slake my thirst with some of this Frog snake-bite tonic. Give the guards orders to arrest me for drunkenness when I get back, if I can and if they can."

"An excellent idea, sergeant, and I think I

will go with you," Henry told him. "If the general can get drunk with me without losing caste, I guess I can look upon the cognac with a master signal electrician of the Air Service Enlisted Reserve Corps. You can express my feelings so much better than I can with my meagre vocabulary. I envy you your training as a pipe fitter. Lead on and we will drink a libation to 9214."



## FED UP

*To those gallant comrades who I saw fight their last fight—Lieutenants Trapp, Thompson, Hall, Grider, Forster, Mandel, Kenyon, Hamilton, Siebald, Curtis, Frobisher, Jenkinson, and Avery. Their vacant files were never filled.*





## FED UP

**H**ENRY was tired. He got up every morning tired. He wanted to go away to a quiet place where he could sleep for a month. He was so nervous now he couldn't stay in bed five minutes unless he was completely exhausted or dead drunk. Sleep? He would never sleep again.

For months now—it seemed years—he had been doing nothing but flying, drinking, and arguing with dumb girls. The likker sooner or later went to his head, the girls sooner or later gave in, and the flying sooner or later would bump him off. What was the use?

Five months he had been at the front now. Five months or five years; he'd forgotten which. His ears were ruined, his eyes were strained until he couldn't read, and his heart beat around a hundred in the air and a hundred and forty on the ground.

Somewhere in the back of his head was the picture of a big white house with a wide shady lawn. He used to call it home. And so was there a memory of marble palaces and golden cities and turreted castles from the fairy tales. Was the big white house a part of them? He couldn't remember. His home now was in the clouds. Years ago he had left his girl. His girl? Was that the same one the prince awakened with a kiss in the enchanted castle? He wasn't sure. What difference did it make? He was going on patrol in half an hour. His date was with Atropos. The Fokkers had a new leader, apparently a man of

That was a bad show yesterday. The Fokkers had a new leader, apparently a man of cunning, who had taken Richthofen's place. He knew how to fight Camels. Judge Wilmot had gone down in flames and Ben Thomas had died in the ambulance after he got back to the field—shot through the stomach and leg, he had flown back to his own field to die among friends.

Henry felt badly about that show. He wasn't

leading it but was up above protecting, and he saw the disaster coming. The Hun leader had made a feint with half his patrol and then zoomed up as his other men came down. It was a dangerous thing to do, but it evidently had been carefully planned and rehearsed. It worked and Henry had gotten only one doubtful bird to sooth his injured pride and ease the loss of Ben and Judge. It wasn't his fault—it wasn't anybody's fault—give the Hun credit for something—but it was up to him to see that it didn't happen again. Maybe he might get revenge!

He had just landed after leading a patrol and his feet seemed to drag as he walked into his office to take off his flying clothes. He told his sergeant to shoot the gunnery corporal at once. Every time he'd get on a Fokker's tail his guns would jam. And get him a new buckle for his shoulder yoke so he could unfasten it in the air if he had to. You can't change gun locks if you can't reach forward.

Johnny Warren walked up to join him. Johnny was the flight commander of C Flight

and had led the top flight of five machines above him.

"Say, for Pete's sake, use your head, Hank," Johnny begged him, "I washed out another plane in that scrap to-day—all full of holes and one through my floorboard. These Fokkers have got something now they haven't had before."

"Yes," Henry agreed, "I believe it's a new motor. There's been a rumour about it for some time. I hopped on some cold meat yesterday and he not only climbed away from me but could turn right along with me. I didn't get a shot at him and he got two cracks at me—if you don't think they're good. I'll say they've got something! And the boy who was leading their formation was all to the mustard. But that stunt they pulled yesterday was overripe. If Judge had been a little quicker and climbed back toward me instead of going down after those first three, we'd have mopped up. I'm not blaming Judge—he's gone now, anyway—and nine times out of ten he'd have been right. He knew I could

take care of myself and he didn't know the first ones had a new motor to zoom up so fast. I guess I'd have been sore as hell if he'd let them get away with their feint."

"Well, you know about these new motors now, so don't try to win the war every day. Leave a few Huns for the next generation to scrap with. I haven't got any grudge against the Hun as long as he's got the best motor. And Napoleon said that God was on the side of the most horsepower. He spoke a mouthful."

"Suppose you lead hereafter."

"No. I'd rather you'd lead. I'm not worried about your leading. You're the best patrol leader in this outfit and got the best eyes in France, but for Pete's sake don't be so pugnacious. There's no time limit on this war. Judge got his yesterday because he was trying to keep up with your pace, and he couldn't make the grade. It'll get even you before long. And when you go, you'll snap like a straw. I'll stick by you till hell freezes over, but don't turn my hair gray with any more shows like

that one last week. If they'd had these new motors last week, you and me would either be guests of His Imperial Highness or His Plutonic Majesty."

"You need a rest, Johnny; why don't you take it? You're getting stale."

"Who's going to keep the Huns off your tail while I take leave? Tubby is blind as a bat and has done lost what little guts he ever had."

"Well, thanks for sticking if it's on my account, but you'd be better off in the long run."

"If you take a rest, I'd be all right. You're the baby that keeps me awake nights. Take a rest yourself. Ain't you got any nerves at all, you fish?"

"Don't know. I'm afraid to find out."

They walked over to the squadron office to make out combat reports.

Henry was tired. He sank into the chair and couldn't remember what he was going to write. He had to ask Johnny the time, the height, and the number of Fokkers. He knew

all this but his mind was too tired to recall it.

Then he strolled down to the mess tent and looked at himself in the mirror behind the bar. His eyes and nose were red with a coating of black carbon from the exhaust and burnt powder from the guns. His chin and cheeks were white where the helmet protected him. God, he was tired. He had a highball and somebody handed him some mail. Four papers and a dozen fat letters. He threw the papers in the wastebasket and stuck the letters into his pocket. Maybe he would read them later. No, he'd be damned if he would! Then he'd have to answer them. As long as he didn't read them he felt no obligation to answer them. He had another highball and started an argument with the gunnery officer who came bustling in to explain that the stoppages occurred because he didn't know how to handle his guns—probably let them get cold—opened fire too soon——

He walked off to finish his drink in peace and read *La Vie Parisienne*.



He had another highball and a couple of bottles of beer with lunch and then slept until four. God, he was tired!

At five he was on patrol again. This time he was on top and Tubby White of A Flight was leading. The sun was with them now and the wind as well. The Huns had enough for the day, and didn't fancy fighting with the sun in the west. Tubby scared up a two-seater underneath the clouds and Henry had to stay up and watch while all five streaked down out of the sun, pounced on it, and shot it down in flames. He landed in disgust.

God, he was tired! He had not walked a mile in six weeks. He didn't even climb in and out of his machine without two men to assist him. He got into bed alone and lifted his own glass. That was all the exercise he got—yet he was dying of exhaustion.

That was the way he felt—tired. Tired all the time. Nervous? No. Just tired. Can't sleep. Can't eat. Drink gives me a headache. Just tired. Frightened? Never. Worried? Hell, no. Just tired. Fight all the time. All



night. All day. Forever. My God—won't we ever do anything but fight? Nerves? No. Got nerves like iron. Just tired!

And now he had to have dinner with the British colonel. That meant another binge. Americans on the British front were expected to binge. They had a reputation to protect.

He and the C.O. arrived at the colonel's château at eight. The colonel, his adjutant, the wing gunnery officer, the wing equipment officer, the wing intelligence officer and the flight surgeon were all discussing the day's combat report. Richthofen's old circus had accounted for fourteen British pilots, and there were four missing. Only one Fokker was known to be destroyed and three two-seaters. We had also lost three balloons. That irked the colonel particularly. Not a very good day.

Henry had five cocktails with the colonel. The colonel was crying for vengeance. Henry was mourning for Ben. He could still see Ben being lifted out of his plane. Ben was mad about the matter. He was cursing the Kaiser when he died. Henry somehow felt ashamed

that he wasn't mad, too. Why was it he always killed in cold blood? He never took any joy in it. And very little interest now. Months before it had thrilled him—now it only tired him.

The colonel wanted a whole flight to act as decoy. Henry admitted that as decoy he didn't have his equal except in the German Army, and he wasn't sure about that. The colonel asked him if he would go over with the flight and stay over long enough to get the whole Hun circus down on him.

"Sure," said Henry, looking about to see where the sixth cocktail was coming from. "If you give me enough planes up above to handle them when they come down. No use having decoys if your gun isn't loaded. Napoleon said never to go into battle with a broken sword. Or was it Casanova? I don't know. Just like taking a girl to walk after a rain."

"How many do you think you'd need?" the colonel asked. "You can have all you can use."

"Give me fifteen Camels for the trap," Henry told him, "fifteen S.E.'s up above the

Camels to get the Fokkers, and ten Dolphins at 22,000 to keep anything off the S.E.'s."

"All right," said the colonel, "day after to-morrow morning. I'll have the S.E. and Dolphin majors bring their flight commanders over for a conference to-morrow afternoon. And if you don't get the Fokkers, don't bother to come back."

The general of the brigade came in with his adjutant. Henry had five cocktails with the general. They were old friends. Either the general had stolen his girl in London or he had stolen the general's girl. It took half an hour to settle it. At any rate, she was a fine girl! Henry magnanimously forgave the general.

Dinner was served at nine and was constantly interrupted by telephone calls from squadrons. There was soup and white fish and chicken livers and salad and champagne—a great deal of champagne.

Henry was called upon for jokes. He told all he knew. Stories he hadn't told since he was in grade school—stories that rustled the

shroud of Joe Miller's corpse—stories that hadn't been laughed at in fifteen years. But the British laughed. They enjoyed them. Henry recited them until the champagne overcame his tongue and he could not make sense.

After dinner, they gathered around the piano and sang. The general played and they sang "Keep the Home Fires Burning," "Little Gray Home in the West," "Down the Long, Long Trail," and other songs of British gaiety. Then Henry and the C.O. sang "The Royal King of England" and had to repeat it three times.

The colonel led the way into another room where there was a roulette table. He had several hundred five-franc pieces for chips. Each man took his turn at banker and everyone played. Henry was lucky. He won 2000 francs. What good was that? He hadn't spent 200 francs in four months. What good was 2000? He tried to lose it but he only won more. They were drinking port now, and cognac and whiskey. Henry stuck to the port.

It was heavy and would put him to sleep. It did. He woke up in the car outside his tent and the chauffeur was shaking him and the C.O. to awaken them. Damn good evening!

The next day Johnny led an uneventful patrol and Henry made plans. He was going to avenge Ben. Rot! Ben was killed in a fair fight. He was simply going to outguess that Fokker leader. He was going to let him see two top flights but not let him suspect the S.E.'s. The Fokker leader would be acting as decoy himself. So much the better. He could spring his own trap. He could slap himself in the face with his own shovel.

He went out for an hour in the afternoon to drop little twenty-pound bombs on the Hun back area. Nothing exciting.

The majors and flight commanders of the S.E.'s and Dolphins came over. They were all kids younger than Henry, but they had been flying at least two years, a year of it at the front. They didn't like the idea of following a comparatively inexperienced leader. But the decoy had to lead and they were heartily

in favour of letting the Camels be the decoys. Nobody wanted to be a decoy. It wasn't safe.

In the end they were satisfied—all but the Dolphins. They refused to go beyond gliding distance from the lines unless there was a dogfight in progress. Their motors were bad and they had forced landings on every patrol. They would start on the patrol with fifteen planes. Maybe they would get ten up to 22,000 feet. Maybe—no promises. That's where the Dolphins had the advantage. They were no good down low.

Then the majors and flight commanders descended upon the bar and the battle raged until dusk. Somebody took them out and threw them in their planes and started up for them.

Henry took off at exactly six next morning. They chose that hour because the Fokkers were sure to be out enjoying the advantage of the sun behind them, and still the sun wasn't high enough to let them get immediately above them.

Henry had four planes behind him. Johnny was a thousand feet above him with five planes and Tubby was a thousand feet above Johnny with six planes. Sixteen little Camels—going out to deliver an invitation to battle.

At 10,000 feet over a ruined town they made a rendezvous with the S.E.'s. The S.E.'s turned south and continued to climb. The S.E.'s worked best at 15,000 feet so they were to stay high up. The Camels were no good above 12,000. At 18,000 were the Dolphins—how many, he couldn't see.

He crossed the lines at 12,000 and was greeted by a bombardment of Archie. Fine—good advertisement! The S.E.'s were invisible now. Good! Mustn't let the Huns see them.

He steered straight into Hunland for ten miles, turning, twisting, and peering below and above. Nothing but Archie. Johnny was back three miles and 2000 feet above him. Tubby was 2000 feet above Johnny. Then there were the S.E.'s and finally the Dolphins. Just like the steps of stairs. When the fight



started the formation would collapse like a house of cards. Woe to the Huns at the bottom!

Henry turned south and held his level. The wind was against him fairly strong so he turned back to the lines. Mustn't get too far over. That Hun leader knows his business.

In ten minutes he saw what he was looking for—four Fokkers 2000 feet below him. So that was it? The Hun leader wasn't going to take a chance of letting him slip out of his clutches this time. He was going to cut him off from below. He studied the sun, his finger covering the ball of it. There they were! Two layers of them—about ten in each layer several thousand feet above him.

The four were climbing and turned south underneath him. The nerve of it! What an insult—four Fokkers flying under fifteen Camels! He knew it was because they had other machines above him. They were decoys too! All right, a little closer to the lines and he'd give them the surprise of their lives. He'd nail those four first—before the others got



down on him—he'd show them what to do with decoys!

The Huns above were drawing nearer, two traps were ready to be sprung. All right, he'd spring it. He warmed his guns, waved to his men, and raised his right arm. Then he put his nose down and throttled back. No zooming now—he was going to stay down' with them—dogfight those four; and he didn't need speed—too much speed and he couldn't shoot straight or get in a long burst.

The four Fokkers saw him coming and were ready. They closed up and turned. Henry took the leader head on. The leader turned and Henry was on his tail in a flash. But before he could get his sights on him another Fokker was firing at him. He saw the tracer bullets streaking by and had to turn quickly. The Fokker stuck on his tail. He circled and turned to shake him off. Where was Johnny? The Fokker was firing again. Pretty close, that! Here were the others! Down came five Camels, guns blazing tracer sparklets and phosphorus. Four Fokkers and ten Camels—

but only for a second. Eight more Fokkers dived after the Camels! A Camel was firing at the Fokker on his tail. Good old Johnny! He could tell it was Johnny by his streamer. He saw the Camel go down out of control. Poor Johnny! Good-bye, Johnny. Henry was firing at a Fokker and a Fokker was firing at him when both guns jammed. Damn that gunnery officer. He turned on his side, loosed his shoulder yoke, and worked at the stoppages. One clear. Where's that hammer? Bang! The other gun was clear. Where's that top flight?

Five more Camels plunged into the centre of the whirling mass, each man taking a Fokker as he levelled off. Henry saw two planes go down in flames—burning like meteors. So swift was their descent that he could not tell friend from foe. All were firing, twisting, turning. Henry saw a Fokker beneath him and pounced onto its tail. The Fokker half rolled, and he turned quickly onto another. There was that damn sickly yellow phosphorus again in front of him. He

looked back. Then came the other eight Huns. Where were the S.E.'s? He was too busy to look.

He looked at his altimeter—10,000 feet. He noted his position—ten miles over. A killing for the S.E.'s. For God's sake, come on! He saw a Fokker explode and blaze up. Fine. Down went another plane, twisting dizzily and smoking badly. A Camel this time. God, what a fight! Greatest dogfight in history. He was proud that he had staged it. Beyond his control now—nothing to do but fight his own battle. Another jam—he cleared it and looked above him. There was a Fokker coming down on him. He turned sharply and the Fokker roared by and turned back toward him. Henry noticed that he had a streamer on his rudder—it was the Hun leader! All right—after this scrap one side or the other would have a new leader. Johnny was already gone. He must even up the score.

There were the S.E.'s. We've won! My God, there're more Fokkers! Where'd they come from? What a fight! He saw an S.E.

and a Fokker collide, head on. A horrible sight. An immediate death was kind—think of the seconds they had to wait as eternity rushed up at them. There were the other Fokkers. Must be fifteen of them. All right—every man for himself. The sky was black with planes and powder. The greatest fight of the war!

Henry and the Hun leader were to the southeast of the fight and five hundred yards from it now as they jockeyed for position. Twice they came at each other head on and pulled away in climbing turns at the last fraction of a second before colliding. Nerve the fellow had! Not a shot fired—both were too wary and too cool to waste a foot of altitude for a random shot. A burst of twenty at fifty feet on a man's tail was worth 300 random shots. Henry didn't even glance through his sight. He was watching the Fokker—an ugly square plane with a white nose and a black and white checkerboard fuselage and tail. He made out a skull and crossbones on it. The same fellow! He'd give him a death's head all right. They had closed in now and were

circling. The circle was not a hundred feet in diameter and each plane was at the nadir, flat on its side in a vertical bank. Occasionally one would hit the other's backwash and stagger dizzily for a moment, then get back its stride. Not a shot came from either pair of guns.

Henry glanced at the ground. The wind was blowing him farther over; this wouldn't do! All the Hun had to do would be to hold him in a turn, and the wind would do the rest. He must get out of this.

Henry was as cool as if he were playing chess. He had perfect command of every faculty—every resource. He was in the enemy's territory. He had a good plane but a poor motor. The Hun clearly had the better motor for he was gaining a little in height every time.

Henry was thinking calmly: this bird is too good for me—I'll never get him—got to get out of this—can't run for it—he'd get me first crack—can't stay here—other Fokkers will see this fight and come down—then *fini*. Gotta

get out of this—this fellow knows his job and he's gaining—he's gaining twenty feet a turn—we're at 7000—he'll run me into the ground at this rate—he'll get above me—then he's got me. I can come out of this turn, but he'll be on my tail above me. I can half roll and loop, but he'll follow me. Everything I do, he'll do right above me. If I half roll, he'll half roll. Sooner or later he gets me. He'll never fire until he's sure of me. If I go into a spin, so does he. When I come out, he's still on my tail. He can do this all day—damn fine pilot. And he will! Well, I've got to get him. Got to get him! Only one way to do it. It's he or I now. Take a chance. Let him get on my tail—he's going to sooner or later—dive for it and see who can stand the gaff the longest. Then pull the old trick on him—it might work. When I pull up, he'll pull up and wait for a shot. I'll take one when he isn't looking—worth a try—my only hope!

Henry looked at the sun and waited until his back was to it. Then he levelled off and dived toward the lines.

Come on, you sucker, I'll dive until I see your tracer!

He hadn't long to wait. The Hun finished his half circle and dived after him. Henry had a start of five hundred feet on him.

The Hun closed it up. Henry turned around as far as his shoulder yoke would let him and watched—three hundred feet—two hundred feet—one hundred feet. He must sit still and take the first burst. He was suddenly cold as he awaited the crack of the spandaus. How good a shot was this Hun? Cool and deliberate he was. Could he hit him with the first burst? He'd soon know. Gotta sit and take it.

140—150—160—175—his airspeed indicator told him. It broke. Crack—crack—crack! There it was—the Hun was making his killing. Now for it! Henry had both hands on the stick and he pulled it back steadily with all his force as he pressed his own trigger. The terrific pressure threw him back into his seat and pressed the breath out of him.

He was looking through his sight now—



God what a noise from the wires! He heard one snap—good shot—would his wings stay on? The whole machine shook convulsively as his nose rose, pointed straight up, and continued backward in a loop. Would the Hun see him and pull up or would they collide? Crack! Something pierced his left shoulder. Good shot again!

Then he saw through his sight what he was looking for—the white nose. Both guns were going and he pushed the stick forward to hold his sight on the Hun—just a second, oh God—just a second! He was upside down now—both guns playing on the white nose.

His nose started to drop—he half rolled and turned quickly—thank God for that shoulder yoke—ouch—how his shoulder hurt! Where was the Hun? There he was—my God, what a zoom! The Fokker was going straight up like an elevator—he must be doing 250—there, he's half rolling—he's—— An icy hand gripped his heart as the wings folded backward and the Fokker turned a somersault in the air and went roaring down not fifty feet



from him. He watched it a second and saw it fluttering downward. Too bad—he was losing a friend—a fine fellow—hell of a war!

He was diving toward the lines now with his motor wide open. He must get back quickly. Faster—faster—faster—nothing could catch him now but the angel Gabriel. He tried to look back, but when he moved his shoulder stabbed him. The pain made him sick at his stomach. How was his arm? He could move his arm all right—at least he could land—he could work the throttle. God, what pain! Would he bleed to death before he got back? Probably. He felt he was fainting.

There were the lines, two miles ahead. Should he land in the balloon line while he was still conscious? No. Go on—back where he came from—like Ben did. Die on his own field—that was the way to do it. He could feel the blood running down his back. Was his shoulder blade broken? He tried to move it—the pain made him wince. What about his lung? Pierced? He took a deep breath. More

pain. Yes, shoulder and lung. *Fini la guerre!* He was through. He and Johnny—gone the same way! And Ben! Good way to go!

They'd died with their shoes on! All right.

What's the use of the whole thing? Been fighting five months. What for? To get plugged through the shoulder by a better man.

He wondered if he had hit the Fokker or if the Fokker had simply broken up from structural weakness. Nobody would ever know. At least, he was firing at the Fokker. He would get credit for it. Credit? What did he want with any credit? He couldn't take any credit with him where he was going.

He was tired, dog-tired. His mind burned him. Well, it was all over now—he could feel himself getting weak. Could he last it? God, what pain!

Well, this was the end. Suddenly he was frightened—panicky. He didn't want to die. He was young; the wealth of life called to him. He had never been afraid to die—damn it, he wasn't afraid to die now—never had been afraid—he knew he had to die—that was

the bargain he had struck with himself as the price of his courage. But he wasn't ready yet to pay the forfeit. He wasn't afraid—only regretful. Now he would never enjoy the fruits of his labours. In the moment of victory he was snatched away. He would die in torture like Ben. He recalled his shrieks of agony. No, he wasn't afraid to die but he was afraid of pain. He couldn't stand pain. They would probe and cut and sew. He couldn't stand it! Should he dive into the ground now and end it?

This was the end. Why? He had given his life. For what? He couldn't remember. War! A good joke on him. He was a soldier—well, soldiers got killed. Why? So somebody else could get the booty. So the Congressmen's sons could take their feet off their desks and go home and get elected to office eternally. So Wall Street could get 8 per cent. So our grandchildren could be taught a fresh bunch of lies. This was glory. This was the end!

— Was this what happened to a drowning man? God, he was so lonely. He didn't want

to die. He wanted to scream it so loud that Johnny would hear and yell back to him. Think of the wine he would never drink—the girls he would never kiss—the books he would never read—the music he would never hear! A big monument at home—taps—he felt sorry for himself and the tears came. No, he didn't want to die—he wasn't going to—he must pull himself together! He must fight for his life.

There was the airdrome. He throttled back and sideslipped in. He landed in a daze. How tired he was!

He taxied up to the hangar. A lot of serious faces—his sergeant at attention—come here—help me out—send for doctor—shot through shoulder—Hun leader did it—then pulled wings off. He noticed all his flying wires were loose and flapping—a narrow escape from crumpling. All right, get me out.

They lifted him out tenderly and laid him on the ground.

"There it is," exclaimed the sergeant; "drilled clean through. Look at the blood."

He was dizzy. They were taking off his helmet and boots and overalls, then his shirt and undershirt. Why didn't they hurry? Here was the doctor. The doctor bent over him and put his hand on his shoulder—he was wiping away the blood——

Henry saw the bloody cloth—blood from his shoulder—his life's blood! Then he fainted.

When he came to he was lying in the shade. The sergeant was sitting beside him fanning him with his hat and holding a wet piece of cloth on his forehead. The pain was all gone and a piece of canvas was thrown over him.

"There, you're all right," the sergeant soothed him. "Those yellow-bellied Heinies can't kill you. We got ten of 'em this morning—five of our men missing. Lie still a minute. You're all right. Your plane's no more good. Every wire loose—full of holes too."

Henry groaned. Why, he didn't know. He was in no pain. He was just tired.

"I guess you got to get a new sergeant," he

went on. "I blacked an eye for that damn medical sergeant. He laughed at you. And I nearly busted the doc one too. Damned old sawbones!"

"Laughed at me?" Henry asked, trying to think what he had done that was funny. "Why was he laughing at me?"

"'Cause you thought you were hit and weren't. If somebody took a shot at that medico he'd run all the way to Calais."

"Not hit? What about my shoulder?"

"You must have reared back something fierce 'cause you jabbed the buckle tongue of your shoulder yoke plumb through your flying suit and dug it an inch under your skin. Must have stayed in the flesh because it's all torn loose. All right, let's go down and get doc to plaster it up. I'd better let one of the other men take you down. I ain't popular in the medical tent right now."

"All right, my boy," the doctor told him as he worked with tape and gauze. "I'm glad it's no worse. But you're through here. No more flying for you for a while. I've been expecting

you to break—you can wear out any machine. You had a fine case of dementia. You go to Boulogne this afternoon. I don't know what they'll do to you there—probably two weeks' leave. Good for you—spend all that money you won—all right—trot along, now.”





NO MORE REUNIONS

*To Clayton Knight*



## NO MORE REUNIONS

I RAN into Joe Gish the other day in the club.

"By the way, Joe, are you going to the Aviators' Reunion Dinner to-night to celebrate the anniversary of the Armistice?" I asked him.

"No," said Joe sourly, "I am not. Tell the boys 'chin chin' for me and tell the toast-master, if any, that the press of urgent business forces me to send regrets, but that I send my deepest sympathy and that I trust the usual 5 per cent. dividend will be declared."

"Why don't you go?" I enquired. "It ought to be a big party. The tickets are only ten dollars."

"Why don't I go?" he repeated. "Why don't I go? Well, it isn't the ten dollars. As a matter of fact, I have ten dollars. But I'm not go-

ing to dishonour you with my presence, just the same. Pass me the hairlip tonic in that blushing Johnny Walker bottle and I'll tell you why I won't sing 'Mademoiselle from Armentières' with you to-night."

This is the story as Joe related it to me:

The first one of these little attacks of arson, mayhem, and assorted packages of murder was staged on the first anniversary of the Armistice. About a thousand of us attended this large and impressive banquet. We had a big ballroom at the Biltmore, Astor, Commodore, or something—I've forgotten the exact place. One of our brightest young ex-aviators went over to Jersey and brought back ten gallons of mountain applejack that was 160 proof and made a sizzling noise like peroxide as it went down. A good time was had by all.

We had a distinguished general there who was scheduled to make a patriotic address. The general finally got introduced, but that was as far as the oratory went. In spite of a foghorn voice, he couldn't make himself heard

above the noise of a crap game that was going on right under the speaker's table. So he resigned and joined the crap game.

The tables were cleared and we ended up by staging a football game in that ballroom. I tried a shoestring tackle on a colonel who was carrying a cuspidor for the ball. I missed and crashed into a camouflaged radiator.

I had a big silver flask in my hip pocket and the next morning I found that it was as flat as a pancake, and the words "Good Luck 1917" are still visible on my aspect ratio and can be read with a mirror.

About ten of us were in such good form that we polished off the rest of the apple-jack and went to a cabaret.

There were two men and two girls at the next table to us, and during the course of the evening the two girls went out for a few moments. About the same time, two of our gang left the table. The two birds who were daddy-ing the girls decided that there was some connection between these two more or less unrelated and insignificant events, and when

the girls came back they started a row. I saw what the trouble was and I knew it was all a mistake, so I got up and went over there to explain the matter to them.

The next thing I knew, someone was putting a piece of raw steak on my eye and showing me the back stairs so I could get out quietly. The two gentlemen at the next table were taken to a hospital and all but two of my crowd were taken to jail. The other two slid out with the girls during the heat of the battle behind the smoke screen.

I found my car in a couple of days and got home with a good story about tripping in the dark.

The next Armistice Day came around on regular schedule, and I decided that I'd have to press the flesh with the old gang once more, so I hied myself to town, escorted by a case of Scotch and some good ideas.

Again we had a lot of space at some high-priced hostelry, and all the ancient and honourable aviators gathered together in John Barleycorn's name. Just to be sociable, I took

a drink with forty-two old friends who plied me with everything from denatured shoe polish to straight absinthe.

We finally got seated for a moment, and then I decided that I'd better stay where I was until the room got back in balance. Everyone else was running around, and I was left alone for the moment. I was at the head of table number fourteen, and a waiter handed me a letter addressed to the commanding officer of the 14th Aëro Squadron in care of the banquet. I saw the 14 and opened it.

It was from a lady, and she said she wanted to thank me for the kindness I had shown her, and that she had never had a chance to do so before. She had seen in the paper where the 14th was going to reunite at the banquet and she wanted to take this opportunity to send her thanks and her best wishes to all the squadron. It was signed with her full name, and the street address was on the stationery. I tried to find some of the 14th to pass it on to, but I couldn't find anybody in that mob.

The party broke up early and I remembered

I still had the letter. I thought the least I could do was to call up the lady and tell her that she was quite welcome for whatever the C.O. of the 14th had done to her.

I found a name similar to hers in the directory at that address, and I got her all right. We chewed the rag awhile, and I suggested that it was now just the shank of the evening and that the lights were bright and the music positively contagious, and I thought that being as how we were old friends, we ought to go out and prance a bit.

She didn't think much of the idea at first, but I was so enthusiastic about it that I finally persuaded her that such things were being done everywhere and she might as well be universal.

So I went and got her and a bottle of Scotch, and we stepped out in the cool of the evening and tripped the light fantastic up and down the Great White Way until the last lobster palace was closed on the inside as well as the out. And that rag and bone certainly could



shake her shimmy—no foolin'. She had red-hot dogs. And she wasn't hard to look at, either.

Naturally, she didn't recognize me; but I reminded her that we all looked different in mufti than in uniform, and I told her I'd had a crash that had changed my face. That was about the only true thing I did tell her. It seemed that she had been a nurse up at Nancy, and that one night she and two other nurses were on their way back from Paris and the train had been bombed and they had been taken over to an airdrome by some aviator who was on the train. The C. O. had received them graciously and given them his hut for the night and sent them back to their hospital in his car the next morning. And that was why she wanted to thank me again. She wanted to do a lot of reminiscing, but I cut that short. She kept on asking about various pilots, and I gathered that most of the boys had followed up their advantage and done a lot of dual work around that hospital. She mentioned

a couple of them whom I did happen to know, so I stalled through a little of it and then got her mind off bomb raids and hangar flying and back on the hop, skip, and jump.

We really had a nice evening, and I decided that reunions weren't such terrible affairs, after all. Along about dawn we trailed home, and she suggested that I come in while she strangled some eggs. That sounded like the right answer to me, so in I went. She lived on a side street a couple of blocks off the Avenue.

We walked in and slammed the door and walked upstairs to the living room. I could just feel Nemesis give me a shove as I went in.

For there in the living room was a big husky-looking brute who was quite evidently in a bad humour. He put down a glass he had been emptying and scowled at us quite unpleasantly. The smile on my face froze and wouldn't come off.

"Hello, dear," says the little girl sweetly; "I thought you were in Philadelphia. When did you get back?"

"Where have you been?" he demanded sourly, ignoring her question.

"Oh, I've been out dancing with this gentleman, here. He used to be the commanding officer of the 14th Squadron." Then she turned to me and said, "I want you to meet my husband."

"Oh," says he, looking me over as if I smelled bad, "so you used to lead the 14th into battle, did you?" Then he turned to her: "Is that the best one you can think up? Try again, and see if you can't do better this time!"

"That's the truth, Harry," she sobbed. "Don't you believe me? What's the matter with you? Why, you've been drinking! You said you had quit!"

"Shut up," says he, "and get out of here. I want to talk to your boy friend! I'll settle this matter myself."

Then I began to get the drift. I'd heard about the old badger game all my life, but I never thought I'd get sucked into one of the frame-ups. Well, here I was; I'd taken hook, line, and sinker, and here was the aggrieved

husband ready to collect. I know I was in a bad position, but I was going to give them a run for their money. I didn't want my name in the papers under any black lines but I was going to bluff a little. I'd read all about how the game was played, and I was a little bit peeved, because I didn't think I'd gotten my money's worth. The husband isn't supposed to show up in the first act at all. I knew the outline of the game, so I said :

"Can the comedy. I wasn't born yesterday. I get the idea. You've caught me red-handed. Let's get down to business. I'm guilty, all right—guilty of being a sucker. Well, what are you going to do about it?"

"Oh," says little wifey, "you don't understand. You——"

"Shut up!" says the fellow that's playing the part of the husband ; "and get out of here before I push you out." After she left he turned to me. "So you're a wise guy! I suppose you learned all that while leading the noble 14th over Metz. Say, what's your name?"

"None of your business," I told him. "And I've got a sprained wrist, I can't sign any checks. And permit me to tell you that the telephone operator at the club knows that I came to this address, so you'd better take good care that nothing serious happens to me. So talk turkey—how much do you want to apply the uxorial salve? What's the price of the balm of Gilead for your affections? 'What price deception now? Next time you'd better pick on somebody with more cash to blackmail."

"Blackmail!" says he. "Blackmail? Why, you poor insignificant little ingrowing backfire. For a rubber nickel I'd bounce you off the sidewalk and throw the window after you."

"That wouldn't help your bank balance any," I came back; "and you'll sure hang for it as I'm related to the district attorney."

"The hell I would! Not while I'm a friend of William J. Burns." Then he chuckled. "So," he laughed, "you have bearded the old badger in his den and now defy the gang!

Well, what would you say if I chucked you and Fainting Fanny out in the street and let you finish your act to suit yourselves?"

"Come on," I said, "and quit stalling. I thought there was something queer about the deal all along. That note at the Biltmore didn't look right; if I'd only stopped to think, I'd have seen it all then. Pretty crude on the whole!"

"So you were at the Biltmore, eh? What were you, a waiter?"

I glanced down at my dinner coat. "No," I said with some dignity, "but I suppose that's how you got in to spot me and send me the note."

"What note?" he asked.

"Why the come-on note, you poor fish," I told him.

"Give me that note!" he shouted.

"Give you nothing," I said. "I'll save that note for evidence. I left it at the club anyway."

"You're a liar," he yelled. "Give me that note quick or I'll double-joint your damn

neck." He came across and towered over me with his fists clenched. "Well, do I get it or do I have to turn you upside down and shake you?" Gosh, he was tough!

"I'll give it to you," I said, and as I felt in my overcoat pocket for it, my hand touched the Scotch bottle and I was overcome with an idea.

"Where did that fellow come from?" I shouted, and pointed toward the hall.

"What fellow?" says he, and he turned around to look.

I jerked that Scotch bottle out, and took it in both hands, and broke it over his head. I jumped over him as he fell and grabbed my hat. I didn't touch a single step on the way down. I thought the front door was open downstairs, but it wasn't. It was plate glass, but it didn't stop me any more than a paper hoop does a bareback rider.

I was badly cut up, but not seriously, and I was able to go home in a few days and tell the folks I'd been in a taxi accident.

About six months later I was in town and



I ran into Wild Bill Fitzsimmons. Bill said he was just meeting a bird for lunch, and insisted on my going along. We went up to his club, and who do you think was waiting on him but friend husband! I thought that Bill had gotten sucked in on the same game, and I was about to run for a cop, when Bill introduced us. Then he said to me:

"You two ought to know each other because Harry was a flight commander in the 14th and you were a flight commander in the 171st."

I had my eye on the door, but the big husk laughed.

"I'm glad to meet you," he said; "I've been looking for you for some time. Come on up and have a drink."

"You two go on up," says Bill, "and I'll get my mail and join you."

We went up to the bar and then we stood and looked at each other.

"Take your hands off that bottle!" he said to me, and then laughed. He showed me a scar on the back of his head and I laughed,



too. But it was a sickly sort of laugh, without any kick in it. "You sure swing a wicked quart," he said. "I called up all the hospitals next morning to see if you were badly hurt but you weren't registered at any of them. You ought to go on the stage and put on an act as Houdini. That get-away was good!"

I began to see the point and managed a real honest laugh. "So that really was your wife?" I asked.

"Yes, and she still is," he told me; "and we both owe you a rising vote of thanks, because that cured me of sneaking out for a party with the gang, and it cured my wife of her romantic ideas."

"Yes," I said, "and it cured me of going to any more reunion banquets!"

So you'll have to get somebody else to lead "Madelon" to-night!



BLESSED ARE THE MEEK

*To Will Fleet*



## BLESSED ARE THE MEEK.

A SHORT time ago my firm sent me down to Washington on a matter of some contracts and Winnie Chappel came along to help with some technical details. Our business was with the War Department, and we spent the morning out at the Munitions Building which houses the military staff—"the kennel of the dogs of war," as Winnie called it. We had a very satisfactory morning and concluded our business agreeably and in a much shorter time than we had anticipated. A very pleasant major insisted upon taking us to lunch at the Army and Navy Club and gave us a cocktail at his apartment first.

We caught the afternoon train back, and after we had settled down in the smoker, Winnie turned to me with a puzzled look on his face and enquired:

"That was the War Department we got into this morning, all right, wasn't it?"

"I certainly hope so," I told him, "for I don't want to have to come back down here again next week. That gin was terrible. It would pull the teeth out of a gift horse."

"And those were all army officers we were talking to, weren't they?" he persisted.

"If they weren't, our contracts aren't much good," I said.

"Then it must be that gin," he concluded. "My eyes are all right and this sympathetic gin usually goes to them and my feet before it gets to my head. It usually doesn't affect my head until next morning."

"What's worrying you?" I asked.

"Did you notice how nice and polite all those majors and colonels were? They seemed to have all the instincts of gentlemen. They used to be known as 'gentlemen by Act of Congress.' They were never in the same army that I used to go A.W.O. Loose from. They're not the same breed that used to court-martial us just because they didn't have sense enough

to play bridge and they had to have something to do on rainy afternoons." He paused and scratched a scar on the back of his neck. "And I can't believe that those bullheaded old fools could ever learn anything," he went on. "The last I read of them, they were playing the old army game with Billy Mitchell and trying to make rank cover a multitude of sins."

"Maybe you ran up against some unusual specimens under odd circumstances," I suggested.

"I ran up against all kinds," he said with emphasis, "and I was all kinds myself, and under all sorts of circumstances. I was a private for three months, then I was a sergeant, a cadet, a shavetail, a first lieutenant, a captain, a refugee, and an ex-soldier-thank-God. I was bawled out by some good men in my day, but I never ran up against any friends of these worthy gentlemen we did business with this morning."

"You must remember that there was a war on then," I reminded him, "and there were

all kinds of men in the army. A majority of the officers came from civil life and there were a number of regular soldiers commissioned."

"Oh, I know that. I'm not barking at the Regulars. I got over that long ago. I've got nothing against West Point. Quite the contrary. I nearly went there. But what I am talking about is this: In those days manners were not fashionable in the army. Politeness was looked upon as a sort of weakness. The first thing that was taught a recruit was that he was in the army, and that in the army a man was known by his toughness and his ability to use red-flannel language. The first thing they taught an officer was to greet a superior with a 'sir' and an inferior with a 'damn.'

"I remember I reported to Mineola shortly after war was declared, with a squad of fifteen men who had just graduated from a ground school, and we were on our way overseas. We were supposed to be commissioned right away, but that idea turned out to be one of the best



jokes of the war. We had been shot full of various kinds of serums, so our arms were all swollen up and we were a pretty sick bunch. A hardboiled captain received us, told us what we reminded him of, sniffed a few times as if he were smelling something unpleasant, laughed at my wrist watch, and put us all to work scrubbing floors. Two men fainted during the afternoon but we were kept at it. I went in and told the captain that we were going to sail shortly, and that our families were all in town and had come from distant points to see us off, and that we would like to have leave to go into town to see them. That made this bird laugh merrily and he gave me a lecture on the army that I'll never forget. I didn't believe it at the time, but there was nothing I could do about it. On the way back I ran into an officer that I had known at college and I put the matter up to him. He hadn't been in the army as long as I had, but he said he'd look into the matter for me and find out what could be done about it. He found out that we weren't even supposed to be under that

particular captain, and that we weren't supposed to be on duty for four days yet. That was a typical example of how the complex worked. That was the way one man in khaki regarded the other men in khaki. Of course, that wasn't universal, but it was sort of a tendency.

"Did you ever see a picture of a line of men kicking each other? Well, that was the idea, and I was at the end of the line for a long time—the wrong end! I used to console myself that I would some day get promoted, and then I could do some kicking myself. If the men had an opportunity to make themselves comfortable for a few days there were always forty-seven ways to keep them from doing it. The government was always willing to pay my expenses in a muddy, drafty camp to keep me from paying my own next door to a bathroom. The army in those days had an ascetic ideal. All commanding officers and their understudies and adjutants were Sadists of high standing. I think the general staff must have

decided that the way to make men fight was to get them mad. They sure kept us in fighting trim! The ideal officer was the Prussian drill-sergeant and the military hero was the bird who obeyed orders and went out with six hundred and came back with a corporal's guard. I recall that part of my training as an aviator consisted of five hours' infantry drill every day in the heat and dust of a boiling July sun and then special calisthenics at reveille and taps. One poor little kid couldn't stand it and fainted twice in one week. The commander wanted to kick him out of the army as a weakling. He later became one of our foremost aces—the kid, not the commander!"

"From what I saw to-day," I baited him, "I think you must be prejudiced in your opinion by a few isolated experiences. When you are handling millions of men you can't make exceptions for individuals. You must admit that an army must have discipline. Rules must be ironclad. And officers must be trained to carry them out. You've got to admit

that the Germans were good fighters; they had very severe discipline and were taught to follow their leaders blindly."

"Yes," he agreed, "I guess they were pretty good. But so were the British good fighters. They followed their officers. That is, all except the Australians, and they wouldn't follow the devil himself, even if they were going his way. But don't confuse discipline with meanness. You can make men obey you without making them miserable over it. The British did. Oh, I know you will say that I'm an Anglophile and that I bow down before the British, and all that old balloon soup. Well, I do, all right. But you don't have to be hard-boiled to get men to obey you. You don't have to swear at them all day to get their confidence. And all the courts-martial in the files of the Attorney General's office can't make a coward face a machine gun."

"Perhaps it's the different temperament," I suggested, still hoping for a story; "maybe the Tommies thrived best under persuasion and the doughboys required our sterner methods."

"Rats," was his reply. "You don't get my idea. What I mean is that leadership doesn't have to be of the type that I have explained to you was so admired in Texas during the heat of the battle in France. What I am saying is that we saw this morning an intelligent performance from an efficient army that was impossible in 1917. The two-fisted he-warriors may have been all right at Fort Sill, but when it came to taking those same tongue-blistered and jail-weary doughboys across a drained canal in broad daylight, what made them go wasn't what they had learned since they put on olive drab. Now, I know of another type that illustrates the point. I'll tell you the whole story":

Long years ago, when I was just emerging from short trousers and beginning to take an interest in the razor advertisements, I was a classical student and, to please my grandfather, I was ambitious to become a classical scholar. I was then attending a military school in the Middle West where the classics were not

esteemed highly, and my route was beset with hard stones and sharp thorns. I had some company in the study of Latin but in Greek I was all solo. My regular Greek instructor was taken ill and had to resign, and for a few days it looked as if my career as a Greek scholar would end before it began, as there was no one else to teach me. Then I received a surprise. The superintendent's confidential secretary volunteered to undertake the task of forcing ancient Greek syntax into my none too willing ears. He was a shy young man in the middle twenties and none of us knew much about him. He was a captain by compliment in the military establishment, but no one took him seriously as he seldom wore a uniform and was much too polite to be a military man. Politeness was a weakness with him and he certainly wasted an enormous quantity of it around that school, where everybody else was trying to be military. His extreme politeness and a certain shyness of speech earned for him the nickname, Te-he, and by that name he was always known to us. I think I even used to call

him Captain Te-he, when deep in contemplation of the elusive aorist.

I was so small that my legs dangled several inches above the floor as I sat at the big desk, but he always used to treat me with the greatest formality and fullest military courtesy, as if the little gray uniform that I wore made a great soldier of me. He was very shy and I think he was much more afraid of me than I was of him. He never scolded me and was always liberal in his praise. But, above all, he was a conscientious teacher and never shirked his responsibility.

He was a Princeton man and was very anxious that I should be able to pass my examinations so that I could go there, too. He would tell me of the glories of Old Nassau as we would dig into the mysteries of the middle voice, and the Princeton Tiger would roar amid the fastness of the Assyrian Desert. Together we followed Xenophon across Asia Minor and deployed our hoplites to defend our camp.

He had been a Rhodes scholar and told me



stories about Oxford. He had studied there under Professor Gilbert Murray, who was the author of several translations that I had used on the sly, and I began to feel that Greek was not such a dead language after all. He told me of punting on the Thames as we marched our twenty-five parasangs every day, and I heard of the genius of Sir Christopher Wren as we fled before the Persian hosts.

But a military school is a military school and is not adapted to the requirements of a classical scholar. I could always beg off with *Te-he* when I didn't have enough time to thumb my lexicon, but if my gun was dirty, or my shoes not shined, or the floor not scoured, there was no excuse to be given and the punishment was always more drill, which got my gun dirty again and got more mud on my shoes to be tracked on the newly scoured floor. The lights had to be out at nine-thirty, so I was really unable to put my best foot forward with *Te-he*. But I did try hard, because when I came marching myself into class with no lesson prepared, the hour was wasted and



poor Te-he's whole day was ruined. I finally solved the difficulty of finding time to work for Te-he by a very simple expedient. I obtained permission to stay away from lunch every day and the extra time thus gained I devoted to irregular verbs and to listening to blind Homer sing of the heroes before Troy when rosy-fingered Eos rolled back the shades of night. But let me tell you that no other teacher could ever have made me do it. And no amount of punishment could have made a growing boy do without his lunch for a year.

In due time I took and passed my Princeton examination and, armed with letters from Te-he to the whole classical department, I passed on to Plato, Herodotus, and Euripides, always assisted, I must admit, by the charming versifications of Professor Murray. I remember that once, after a twenty-four-hour boning session, I turned in an examination paper of translations in blank verse of Hecuba and Clytemnestra. I was still fighting the Trojan Wars when another great struggle dawned upon my consciousness. Then a good classical

scholar perished and a bum soldier arose Phœnix-like from his ashes.

After I bade Te-he farewell, with a big shako on my head and carrying a gun taller than I was, I heard nothing more from him. Four years later I entered Oxford as he had hoped, but not to study the classics. I was sent to Oxford, not as a Rhodes scholar, but as a student at the Royal Flying Corps School of Military Aëronautics. Instead of studying under the gentle Professor Murray as I had hoped, I found my studies directed by an authoritative colonel, whose only knowledge of Greek was derived from studying the maps of the Saloniki front.

But Professor Murray was still living in Oxford and I secured an introduction to him and spent several delightful evenings in his study, where I forgot for the moment that the rest of the world was mad.

I finished my course at Oxford and went about my flying. I was at a squadron in the Midlands when I received a letter from Te-he telling me that he was in London and asking

me to get in touch with him. I communicated with him and he wrote and asked me if I could come to London and dine with him Christmas Eve. He said he had learned through Professor Murray that I was in England and he was anxious to see me again. I couldn't imagine what he was doing in England and I thought that perhaps he had come over with the Y.M.C.A. or on some diplomatic mission. I couldn't picture him as a soldier.

I was sent to another squadron and did get to London for the holidays. Then I got a series of surprises. The first was that Te-he was married. He had married the daughter of a very prominent Englishman, Sir ——. The second was that he had been an officer for over a year in a crack British Guards regiment and was now back on sick leave after being gassed at Cambrai.

It was a surprise to find that he was a real soldier, but it was a tremendous jolt to learn that he was in the Guards. For the Royal Guards were just about the last word in exclusive military circles. They were the real

raspasass, red-hot fighting men. Normally the officers came from the nobility or their in-laws, and when not fighting they help the king around the house and lift the cornerstones while the Prince of Wales puts mortar under them. Members of the royal family hold commissions in the Guards without losing caste, and it is generally considered the most honourable position for a gentleman of rank. They were organized by, for, or against Bonnie Prince Charlie or his father—I've forgotten the straight of it—but it's ancient and honourable, all right. Each regiment has its own uniform, traditions, and button spacing. And their discipline is as vital as an accent in Charleston. Up in the trenches, knee-deep in mud, whenever there was a lull in the fighting, the Guards would get out a rag and some polish and start shining their buttons. They used to give me a scare every time I'd get a salute. They'd throw their arms out so hard that I was afraid one of them would come off and knock me down. They were real soldiers and first-class scrappers. No one ever heard

much about their scraps in the papers. The custom of holding a commission in the Guards is the reason why so many of the first families die without issue and have to come over here looking for heirs. Yes, their discipline was good. They had more real discipline at the front than West Point has on parade. That's why I couldn't match up Te-he, in 'baggy trousers and a big sword, flatfooting it around the front yard of Buckingham Palace.

I had Christmas dinner with him at his father-in-law's house. His wife was very nice and I liked all his in-laws. His father-in-law was not only a classical scholar, but an Orientalist of note. He had written a couple of books of Arabic poetry and knew Sanscrit and hieroglyphics. I was 'way beyond my depth that night, but they were all polite and spoke English for my benefit. I had a very pleasant evening, but I didn't get a chance to talk to Te-he privately. I wanted to ask him why he had come over to fight in the British Army, and how he had gotten into the Guards, and why he had gotten married, and how he got

along at the front; but I didn't get a chance to satisfy my curiosity. He explained that his moustache was grown and trimmed in accordance with an ancient custom of his regiment and disclaimed any originality of design for it. We arranged to lunch together the next day at my hotel, but his wife was ill and he was unable to come. I had to return to my squadron, and before I could get to London again, he had gone back to the front. He had only been home on sick leave after being gassed. I didn't even get a chance to ask him about that.

In due course of time I went on up to Scotland to learn to fly upside down without dislocating my eyeballs, and after I became proficient and proved it by the simple expedient of crashing my third plane, I went on out to the front with the Royal Flying Corps to complete my training before joining an American squadron.

A couple of months later, I happened to be up near the front lines in a sidecar, trying to get the crosses off a Hun plane that I had shot

down that morning, and I saw some Tommies of Te-he's regiment. On a chance that he might be near by, I stopped and asked for him. I was told that he was about half a mile farther over and I found him without much difficulty. He was sitting at a camp table and was writing a letter for a Tommy who was dictating laboriously. The Tommy gave a good imitation of a ramrod when I appeared, and finished his tender epistle to his wife in great haste.

I only had a chance to talk to him for a few minutes, as it was getting late and I had a long trip before me. I remember I asked him if he was going to transfer to the U.S. Army. He said no, that he didn't think he would. He said he couldn't leave his men, as they were so dependent on him. He seemed to feel that they would never wash behind their ears unless he was there to take care of them. I told him that he could probably get a majority if he did transfer. He said he was very well situated where he was, and that he didn't think he was particularly well suited to be a major in the



U.S. Army. To tell the truth, I didn't think he was either.

Then I asked him how he happened to be in the British Army. I told him that it was hard for me to picture him as a bloodthirsty adventurer.

"Oh, I'm not," said he. "I've studied the history of all wars since Cain struck Abel, and viewed from a purely academic standpoint, I really wasn't justified in coming over when I did. My sympathies were with the Allies, of course, from the very first. I was especially friendly toward the British on account of my years at Oxford, and I quite disliked the Germans and their ruthless program. To me, there's something of the hog in their character. But that feeling was hardly strong enough to make me renounce the comfort and security of home for this mud and turmoil." He indicated a sea of mud, pockmarked with shell craters, with a sweep of his hand. "It wasn't that wave of righteousness that brought me over," he went on. "It was my wife.



"I met her at Oxford, but I had nothing to offer her at that time and went on back to the States to try and prepare a place that I could ask her to share with me. I was making good progress, when the war came on. To me it was academic, and whereas I deplored the situation, I was not stirred to action. Then her letters gradually grew more intense until they took on the characteristics of a dispatch and the fiery passion of a recruiting speech. She practically wrote me that she could never love any man who was not willing to fight for the honour of civilization, which she saw crumbling under the Teutonic onslaught. So I came over and joined up and she married me as soon as I did."

That was the last I saw of him. I got plugged by a two-seater a little later and was sent down to Boulogne for a few days. While I was in hospital there, I saw a captain from Te-he's regiment who was suffering from a bullet wound in the leg. I talked to him and asked him what news he could give me. He

told me sadly that Te-he had been killed. He asked me where I had known him. I told him, and he expressed surprise to hear that he was an American.

"Fancy that," he drawled, regarding me quizzically through his monocle. "Blessed if I knew he was one of your chaps. He never used to boast about it, don't you know? Quite modest about it! Fine chap, he was. Always the brigadier's little white-haired boy, if you know what I mean. Fine soldier, best subaltern in the battalion, the best in the brigade—no end of cheek at a sticky show. If you have many chaps like him, it won't take long to chase Jerry back to the Rhine."

That's the way with the Guards; they never ask each other a personal question or talk about their private lives.

"I'm glad to know it," I told him, "though I am a bit surprised to hear it. I believe he told me he was gassed last fall. How did it happen?"

"Don't know myself," he told me, "but I think I heard some story about it. Always

hearing stories in these days. Never believe anything I don't see. But I did hear that one of his men was wounded in a gas attack and his mask was bashed about. Poor fellow would have been done in, but your friend gave him his and then exposed himself to a cross fire and got one off a dead man out front. It's a good story, anyway. But I was in the same blarsted show that bumped him off and I can testify to that. We were falling back after Jerry broke through below Amiens and we were all jolly well nigh done in. It looked as if we were jolly well going to be surrounded as everything was on the run, and he was told off to hold a flank position while the others withdrew. But Jerry was right on top of us and everything broke. We had to give way but we counter attacked that night and got back. We found him full of holes beside a machine gun and there was a circle of dead Jerries in front of him. But the 'xtraordinary thing was that his whole platoon was right there with him—all dead! Not a man had cleared out! Jolly good go, wasn't it?"

"Yes," I agreed, "it certainly was. But somehow I never pictured him as a pukka soldier. I can't imagine him telling anyone off properly."

"He never had to."

"But how did he maintain such discipline as that?" I asked.

The captain yawned politely and called for an orderly to bring us brandy and soda. "Oh, no," he said, "I don't think he ever did much in the way of ticking off. We leave that sort of thing to the sergeants, anyway. It's not so really effective, you know. I can't seem to recall that Christ ever lined up His platoon of disciples and blistered their jolly hides with sulphurous remarks. And I believe they carried on fairly well and even gained promotion after their Commander went West."

And ever since that conversation I've wondered to myself whether Te-he wouldn't have done just as well at saving Paris and fertilizing poppies in the Argonne, as some of our loud-mouthed, hard-boiled flap-eared he-men who could walk out in front of a company and

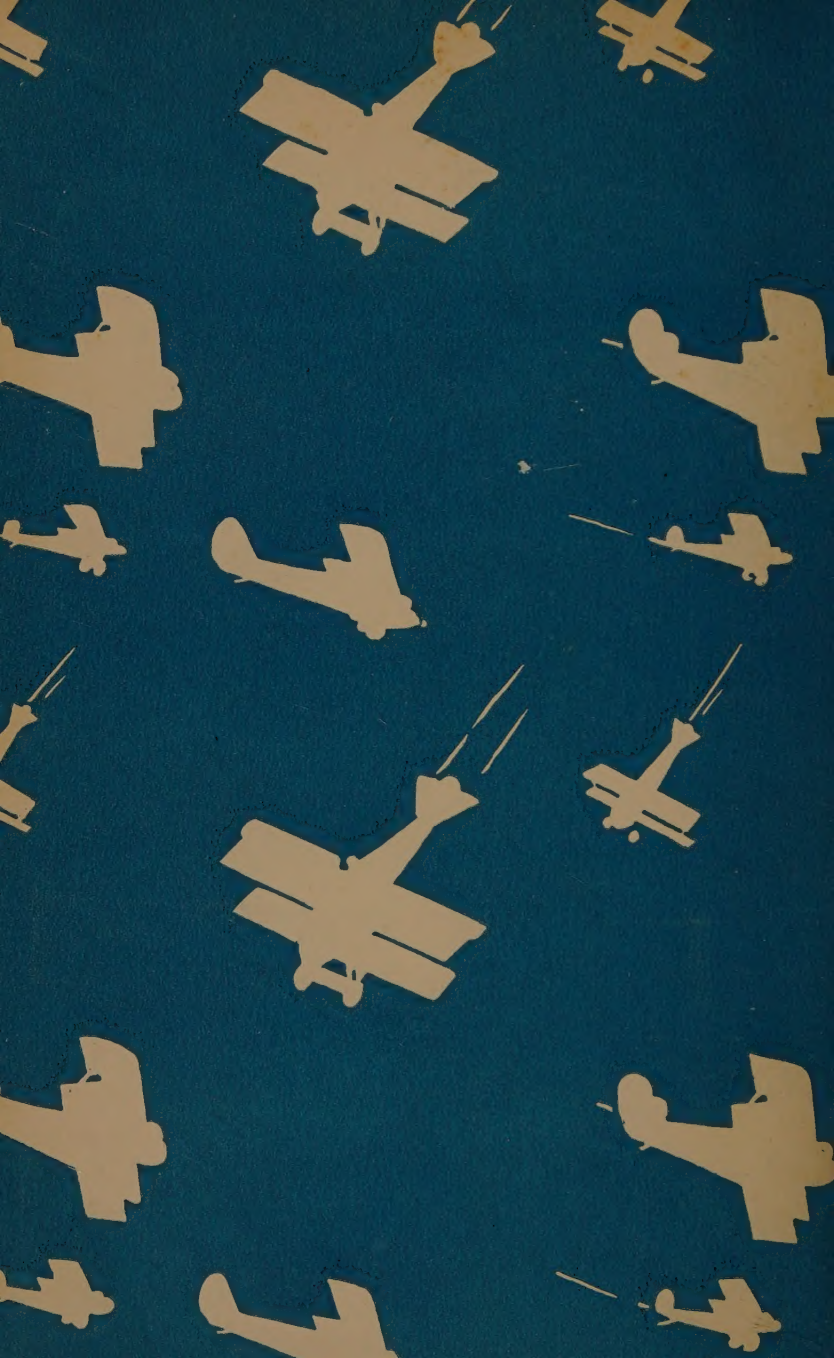
make it tremble at their words. I wonder if maybe that bunch in Washington hasn't heard of Te-he.

"Well"—Winnie stood up and stretched—"here's Baltimore; let's get out and get a bit of air."

THE END









D606

S6

Springs, Elliott W

Above the bright blue sky.

